

The background of the cover is a painting of a tropical sunset. A large, bright sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow over the sky and water. Several palm trees are silhouetted against the sky. In the foreground, two people are sitting on a rocky shore, looking out at the water. In the middle ground, a person is in a small canoe on the water. The overall color palette is dominated by warm tones of orange, yellow, and brown, with some cooler blues in the water and sky.

MY TAHITI

BY
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To Florence Frisbie

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Preface

During twelve years of wandering among the atolls of the South Seas I have attempted, at odd moments, to re-create from memory fragmentary passages from my life in a Tahitian village. It has been a pleasant task—a redeeming from oblivion of the last of a Golden Age.

These passages, sketches, incidents, are an attempt to recapture something of the spirit of native Tahitian life as I knew it during the first three years of the nineteen-twenties. The same life may be in existence to-day in a few of the out-of-the-way corners of Tahiti; but for me it came to an abrupt end one stormy night of the hurricane season. All this I have explained in the pages that follow; here I am only concerned with telling you that I have written these sketches as though describing a people whose culture is already a thing of the past.

A little of the following material has appeared, at odd intervals, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Forum*, and *American Mercury*; and I have taken the liberty to consult Teuira Henry's *Ancient Tahiti* to assure accuracy in the text of some of the old chants and songs.

R. D. F.
PukaPuka, 1935

The Characters of This Book

Abraham: The parson

Ah Jong: The Chinese shopkeeper of Vaiiti

Ah La: The bread-wagon Chinaman; son of Ah Jong

Mrs. Ah La: His wife

Aki Au: Proprietor of a Papeete cafe and narcotic agent

Alex: Manager of the Club

Andre: Young Alsatian singer of the Hotel Tiare

Ariki: A Tuamotu pearl diver

Atua: The white-haired chief of Vaiiti

Boulgasse: A temperamental horse

Faatomo: A village dandy; son of Tuahu

Faiipo: The strong man; a Vaiiti character

Hans Grun: Who owned the palace of the nature men

Captain Harris: Master of the American mail steamer

Jamie: The American nature men whose house protruded over a precipice

Josephus: Genius of his own bar, and undertaker of Papeete

Mama-Reretu or Reretu: Tuahu's wife

Manea: The man who owned an eighth share in Vaimoe

Mrs. Manea: The woman who believed Manea's brains had gone to his legs

Manua: A Vaiiti ancient

Mari: Pretty waitress in the Hotel Tiare

Mauu: Rotund proprietor of the Hotel Tiare

Mutoi: The policeman

Neilsen: The ex-sailor who invented a coffee husker; one of the nature men

Nui-man: The little husband of big Nui-woman

Nui-woman: The big wife of little Nui-man

Old Bill: A temperamental myna bird

Oura-woman: The little old lady who led the himene singers with her strange and beautiful refrains

Captain Owen: Trading skipper of the schooner Potii

Paetahua: A neighbor of Ropati

Paul: A bartender of Papeete

Pauoto: Brother of Mama-Reretu; father of Terii

Pauoto-woman: His wife

Monsieur Pierre: The French missionary

Madame Pierre: His hard-faced wife

Monsieur Poroi: The cinema interpreter

The Professor: The pugilist-beachcomber who was worth a million marks

Reretu or Mama-Reretu: Tuahu's wife

Ropati: The author

Solomon: Proud owner of a lightning wagon

Stonehill: The ex-stoker who lived on a peak; one of the nature men

Taaroa: The schoolmaster who played the piston

Tama-woman: Wife an erring spouse

Taunoa: Another village dandy

Tefa: The road boss

Tei-woman: The sack-wagon gossip

Teraii: The net fisherman

Teriaa: The son of Chief Atua

Terii: Pauoto's pretty daughter; a niece of Tuahu and Mama-Reretu

Terii-woman: One of the owners of the land Vaimoe

Tetuanui: The wife of Atua the Chief

Tevearai: The loud-mouthed; a Vaiiti deacon

Tomi: The adopted son of Tuahu and Reretu

Toto: The old man who called the himene singers with his conch shell

Tua: One of the Mongolian eyes; a half-caste Chinese-Tahitian

Tuahu: The author's native foster father

Whitney: A perfumer in Papeete

In The South Seas

For the water, shoaling under our board, became changed in a moment to surprising hues of blue and grey; and in the transparency the coral branched and blossomed, and the fish of the inland sea cruised visibly below us, stained and striped, and even beaked like parrots. I have paid in my time to view many curiosities; never one so curious as that first sight over the ship's rail in the lagoon of Fakarava.

The room was cold and damp, the air tainted with the musty smell of former inhabitants; the ceiling was cracked, the wallpaper faded, and stained in streaks of yellow.

A streetcar clattered past, the last one of the night; from far across the city I could hear the whistle of an engine as it pulled into the yards. In another hour the early morning train would leave for San Francisco—a port of departure! The thought was troubling. The smell of the room nauseated me. I could hear Anderson, who worked with me on the Morning Republican, breathing heavily in the room next to mine. The damp cold settled on my face and hands, and crept under the covers to give a clammy feeling to my skin.

I turned over a few pages and read.

But it was most of all on board, in the dead hours, when I had been better sleeping, that the spell of Fakarava seized and held me. The moon was down. The harbour lantern and two of the greater planets drew varicolored wakes on the lagoon. From shore the cheerful watch-cry of cocks rang out at intervals above the organ-point of surf. And the thought of this depopulated capital, this protracted thread of annular island with its crest of coco-palms and fringe of breakers, and that tranquil inland sea that stretched before me till it touched the stars, ran in my head for hours with delight.

Nukuhiva, Apemama, Fakarava! Those islands that Stevenson had sketched so deftly that I could close my eyes for the moment and forget the colorlessness of civilized life while visualizing fans of coconut palms waving before the fresh southeast trade, moonlight glinting on long coral

strands; and seem to hear even the distant mutter of the surf pounding along the barrier reef!

An island attracts one strangely and inexplicably. In our youngest days few pleasures have been so great as exploring some tiny bank formed by the forking of a stream, or of dreaming that some day we shall sail to an island in the

... moonlit solitudes mild
Of the mid-most ocean ...

And as we grow older the fascination is not lost. Any man with a spark of poetry in his soul will stand on the deck of a ship to stare, captivated, at an island, while a mainland, even though it be more beautiful, will command but a passing glance.

It is difficult to understand why a weirdly beautiful mainland, clothed in luxuriant vegetation and inhabited by a lovable people, still lacks a subtle and indefinable charm that is manifest on a barren and bleached coral atoll, or even on a sandbank, wind-blown and desolate in the midst of the sea.

The charm may be engendered by the knowledge that here is something one might acquire in its entirety; at least it is something he can encompass: he can walk around it and climb its highest peak, explore it until he is, in a way, its proprietor—much as one feels the proprietorship of a book he has read, a song he has memorized, a village with whose streets, people, spirit, he has familiarized himself. Or it may be a vague memory associated with stories he has read of treasure islands, cannibal islands, islands of glamour and romance.

“Tomorrow I must interview the secretary of the Y.M.C.A. about the New Building Fund, and talk with Judge Sessions about juvenile delinquents,” I thought; and then, I remember, I laughed, aware of a sudden that this sort of thing had come to an end in my life. Stevenson’s book was lying open, propped up against my knees. Once more I glanced at the pages, this time to read.

He told me that he and two ship captains walked to the sea beach. There for a while they viewed the oncoming breakers, till one of the captains clapped suddenly his hand before his eyes and cried aloud that he could endure no longer to behold them.

I rose, dressed slowly, and packed everything I owned in two suitcases. I acted indeliberately, realizing vaguely that I could reflect later—in the moonlight and the shadows of a tropic island. I walked slowly down the hall and slipped out of the house. That was in the early spring of 1920.

Captain Owen

A young man feels intensely the glamour of his first strange port, no matter how squalid it may be. But Papeete was not squalid in those days, nor is it now, though it has changed greatly since I first stepped ashore, young, alive to the picturesque and the unusual.

I left my suitcases in the customs shed and wandered for an hour through the town. The strangeness of the place delighted me; I felt that at last I was breaking into a land of adventure that is forbidden to all save a fortunate few. I saw traders in white drill suits and cork helmets; native women in long, flowing Mother Hubbards and yellow straw hats; many Chinamen, like greasy fat spiders, behind their counters, bargaining shrewdly with equally shrewd natives; and the old-fashioned carriages, shays, surreys, spring wagons, filled with natives from the country districts, the women all but lost in innumerable folds of calico and fathoms of ribbon, and great hats with ruffles and streamers and plaited affairs; the men stiff and self-conscious in their tightly fitting black coats and white trousers. In some of the shops I could hear accordions playing and, on glancing through the doorways, see many natives lounging about bottle-littered tables, and Tahitian girls dancing. But still these people were unreal: they belonged to the volumes of Stevenson and Melville rather than to the scenes of actual life.

Presently I entered a grog shop and ordered a bottle of beer. Several white men were there, at the tables and standing by the bar: traders, pearl buyers, island skippers, perhaps. Whatever their occupations, to me they suggested adventure. At a corner table sat a tall, big-boned man whose rugged face beamed with the smile of a healthy schoolboy. A gold tooth flashed between his full lips, seeming to radiate his sparkling humor.

"He could tell some yarns about the islands," I said to myself.

His white drill suit had been starched and ironed until the creases stood out and glistened. There were mother-of-pearl buttons on his coat, and a band of shell round his white, island-made hat.

Approaching the table diffidently, I asked if I might occupy one of the chairs.

“That you can, my lad!” he cried with a flash of his gold tooth. “Off the steamer for the day, eh?” he added.

“No, sir; I have come to stay.”

“Yes?” He eyed me with more interest; then thrust out his hand in a frank gesture. “Glad to know you,” he said. “I’m Captain Owen of the Potii.”

I shook his hand and told him my name.

“Hey! Paul! Lay over here and meet a friend of mine!” he called to the French-Tahitian behind the bar; and when I had been introduced, he went on: “Bring Robert a rum punch and take this sloppy beer away.”

At home I should have looked askance at a man who treated me with such familiarity, but I felt instinctively that here it was a part of the usual island hospitality. Presently Paul came with a rum punch for me and another one for himself. As the bar was now deserted, he sat at our table and started talking with easy and pleasing familiarity. Where was I from? Fresno. He had a relation there, his sister Irene. Did I happen to know her?

When I said I had not met her, he admitted: “Ah, well, there are many people in your American cities. Perhaps some escape your attention... . But Irene is a beautiful girl; you must have seen her Pardon, there is a customer,” and, rising, he bowed in the polite island fashion and returned to the bar.

“He doesn’t realize that there are quite a number of people in my home town,” I remarked to Owen.

The Captain laughed before replying: “Paul has never been away from Tahiti. You’ll have to get used to our way of thinking down here, my son; you’ll often hear a man say: ‘Oh, I know a person in the United States. His name is Jonesy. Do you happen to know Jonesy?’ Such a man may be able to tell you that there are millions of people in your United States; but he is unable—or doesn’t trouble—to take account of the improbability of your meeting his particular Jonesy.” A moment later he asked me how I liked my rum punch.

“It is fine,” I replied, and finished the drink.

Then Captain Owen rose, saying that we should postpone any serious drinking until he had me settled in a good hotel, had introduced me to the proper people and had obtained a guest card for me at the Club.

And thus Captain Owen was the first man I met in my first island port. I could not have made a better acquaintance. He took me to the customs shed,

got my luggage through unopened, found two native lads to carry it to the Hotel Tiare, introduced me to Mauu, the hotel's rotund proprietor, and saw me established in a cottage in a flower garden. Later we went to the Club, where Alex, the manager, handed me a guest card; then we sat at a table on the balcony with a half-dozen traders and skippers.

Through the medium of Owen I entered easily into the life of the port. The ring of his voice, and that of the others, became familiar, as though it were a continuation to the pages of Stevenson that I had been reading in my cold damp room. Only now the room was gone, the characters had stepped from the pages, real island schooners lay moored along the water front, real traders discussed the big pearl Mauke had found in Mangareva, the wreck of the Daisy Ann, the price of copra and shell in the Tuamotu.

We dined that night on the wide Hotel Tiare verandah. We bowed to the guests when passing between the tables. "Good evening, McDonald," Owen would say. "Meet my friend Robert... . You're looking well, Nansen... . Join me in a liqueur after kai-kai, Bunkley. Like to have you meet my friend."

Ripe bunches of bananas and nets of oranges had been hung above the verandah railing. There were flowers on the tables. Two native boys strummed softly on a mandolin and a guitar. Servant girls passed between the tables, smiling, lithe and soft-footed as lynxes. At times Mauu appeared, holding his hands clasped over his great girth, his double chin hanging below his Adam's apple.

"Everyt'ing all right, Monsieur George?" Mauu would say, stopping at one of the tables and smiling patronizingly. "That vin rouge Baromac is fine, no? I get one whole barrel from Marseilles. Everybody like it. Al-ja! You hear? I got one new baby out in Vaiiti! Oh, he's one number-one baby! All the same me, big belly!" Then he would laugh, pat his round middle, and move on to the next table.

When he had stopped before Owen and me he wagged his head wisely. "You got one fine young feller there, Cap'n," he cried, loud enough for everyone to hear. "I think we get him one number-one wife quick ... nice fat wife ... fine for cold nights when the wind come, biff! from the south!" Another laugh and he had left us. Owen was chuckling while I was red in the face.

We were sipping our liqueurs and coffee when something happened which will always remain vivid in my mind. It was one of those charming

interludes in island life, important because they are beautiful. Mauu had stopped before the doorway leading into the parlor; then had turned and raised his hand for silence.

“What is it, Captain?” I whispered.

Captain Owen put down his coffee cup noiselessly and leaned forward. “It is Andre, the young Alsatian,” he said; then he placed a finger to his lips.

I do not know when first I became aware of it: the first notes must have come so softly that I confused them with the colors and fragrance about me; but in a little the chords from the piano rose in a thundering crescendo, almost shocking me into attention; and when they had died away to exquisite harmonies, a voice of wonderful tenderness seemed to materialize in the air about me, singing a little French song of love. Never had I heard music that harmonized so perfectly with its setting; both the accompaniment and the song seemed a part of Tahiti, or perhaps the Spirit of Tahiti himself. It made old memories turn up again, memories that, though precious, had the sting of sorrow.

We became conscious of the sensuous touch of the mountain breeze, of the colors about us; the perfume from the garden seemed more fragrant; even the flavor of our liqueurs seemed perfected, as though the magic of that delicately emotional music were intensifying the delights of the moment. Mauu had moved to our table, where he stood with an uncorked bottle of Cointreau, ready to refill our glasses; but his hand was arrested, while on his face was a look of unashamed ecstasy. Until the end of the song there was not a sound or a movement among the diners. It seemed like a religious experience.

Among the ports I have visited, only in Tahiti did such things happen. There may be many hotel verandahs where one can drink Cointreau, breathe deeply the scent of exotic flowers, listen to finer music; but the geniuses of such places are less romantic spirits than he who haunted the Hotel Tiare; and in other places, I fancy, men are less susceptible to the little sentimentalities of life. In Tahiti, from the traders to the frankly sensuous natives, little attempt is made at restraint.

Perhaps I drank too many liqueurs that night, for I remember little of the hours that followed. Bunkley sat at our table after dinner, and in his drawling tone talked with Owen; then they left me, and I remember that a little half-caste waitress came to sit at the table for a space, and to tell me,

in broken English and French, about such things as last night's cinema, her many love affairs, Mauu's latest baby.

Later I walked along the water front. Native couples passed me, their arms round each other's waists, strolling slowly and gracefully, trailing behind them the fragrance of flower garlands. On the lagoon-side benches Tahitian lads sat with their sweethearts, strumming guitars and singing. Farther, beyond the street lights, the darkness encompassed gratifyingly; but here and there light streaked from a verandah where a family group chattered or listened to an accordion rasping out odd ute measures.

I went to bed before midnight and fell quickly asleep. The ringing of the cathedral bell woke me at five. Cocks were crowing in the town, and from the direction of the cookhouse I could hear someone chopping wood. Presently a cart rattled past. I rolled over and glanced out the window. A chinaman, bundled on the seat of a rickety vehicle that was loaded with vegetables, passed under an arc lamp some yards down the road. He was followed by a group of natives with bamboo poles across their shoulders, carrying plantains to the morning market. A few moments' silence; then the morning stillness was again broken, this time by a cracked voice singing:—

“Mon pere il pique ma mere; Ma mere, elle pique mon pere, Mais moi, je suis un bon garçon,— Je pique la cuisiniere!”

A rumble of wheels, and soon a high-sided wagon clattered into the circle of light, loaded with rubbish. A little gnomelike fellow walked by the horse, wobbling his head, gesticulating a little, and singing of his cuisiniere. At the hotel gate he stopped to pick up the garbage can and dump its contents into the wagon. Then the horse moved on slowly down the street; but for some time I could hear the grotesque old man singing:—

“Je pique la cuisiniere!”

“Even the garbage man can sing in this happy port,” I thought.

The cathedral bell rang for early Mass, and a few moments later I heard the clanging of the market bell. The first glimmer of daylight seeped into the flower garden. Many people were walking down the road now, all brightly dressed, their market baskets slung over their arms. Some wheeled paston bicycles. The morning advanced rapidly, dishes clattered in the dining room, and the noise of the awakening town stirred the crisp fresh air.

The Sack Wagon

“I like to sell you one little piece land,” Mauu said one day. “Out in Vaiiti, fine district, fifty-two kilometres away. Plenty orange, banana, breadfruit, everyt’ing; and a nice little native house on the beach. All the same paradise. I take one t’ousand francs. I need the money too much.”

Mauu always needed money, though he had a flourishing business, for, day in, day out, his kitchen and the long table for natives on the south verandah were crowded with relatives. For each paying guest that dined at the Tiare there were surely three free ones. Fetii, they were called in Tahitian: relatives, and more than relatives, for a native considered the third cousin of his adopted child’s uncle a blood relative deserving as much consideration as his own brother. So Mauu had plenty of relatives, and always he was short of money.

“We will go out tomorrow on the pereoo pute,” he told me.

“All right, Mauu; I’ll look at the land,” I said. To own land was attractive, for I had been in Papeete several months, and I found it expensive. Also, Captain Owen was sailing on a long voyage to the Line Islands.

Only a slight embarrassment appeared in Mauu’s tone when he went on: “You know, Ropati, I have too much trouble now. The Compagnie Navale they say they take me to court, sure t’ing, because I don’t pay them too much money. I t’ink you pay me that t’ousand francs now. We fix up the papers for the land by and by. Nevva mind, you see. Everyt’ing all right.”

I gave him the money simply because Mauu was the kind of man whom one could not refuse; and just then I could afford it. I received good measure for my money; but I am afraid that the Compagnie Navale saw little of it, for that night there was a great reunion of relatives. Roast suckling pigs and choice sea foods were on the long table, and there were many bottles of wine.

In the districts of Tahiti the villages slept as profoundly as did Mark Twain’s settlements on the banks of the Mississippi. Only hints of animation existed in the houses, the gardens, a washing on the line, a lazy thread of smoke from some cookhouse half lost in the dense growth of

shrubbery. But the honk of the pereoo pute,—the sack wagon,—so-called because it carried the mail bags, had much the same effect as the trail of smoke round a bend in the Mississippi. Men, women, and children, dogs, pigs, and chickens came to life. More than likely a high-pitched voice cried:

“Wake up, husband! Here comes the sack wagon!”

Children rubbed the sleep from their eyes; dogs, pigs, and chickens barked, grunted, and clucked as they scurried under the houses; and the sack wagon thundered grandly in, to come to a noisy stop before the village Chinaman’s shop. It was always crowded with people, garrulous as only Polynesians can be; and on its sides, top, running boards, and hood were sacks of copra, yams, and sweet potatoes; bunches of bananas; great mountain ferns to decorate some Papeete verandah; plantains; bags of oranges; chickens and ducks hung by their legs in clusters; strings of fish; taro; suckling pigs; fishpoles; crabs and lobsters for the morning’s market. The truck itself was lost in an agglomeration of foliage and livestock through which one could catch only glimpses of white coats, red muslin dresses, and brown faces.

Oftener than not a fat jolly girl from one of the districts would be sitting on the front seat with the driver. She would have an accordion across her knees, numerous bundles done up in red and white pareus piled above her; and above her head, hanging from the roof frames in slings of filmy stuff, a half-dozen hats decorated with gorgeous ribbons and streamers. These were for her relatives in Papeete. She would play frantically up to the moment the car stopped, and every passenger from the old Chinaman on the back seat to the driver himself would be singing native songs with unsuppressed abandonment.

The sack wagon stops. The girl thrusts her head through fern leaves and between bunches of bananas and clusters of fowls hanging from the stanchions. “Iaorana outout! Haere mai tamaa!” she screams. (May you live, everybody! Come and eat!) It is the age-old Tahitian greeting.

The pereoo pute had other uses. For instance, it was the island’s timepiece. School children anxious for the hour of recess, working men waiting for eleven o’clock, fishermen wondering when to paddle home and light their native ovens, and the great mass of natives who had nothing in the world to do but compute time—all these listened for the rattle and chug of the sack wagon.

Clocks were set by the truck's passing. I remember hearing an old native say to a Chinese storekeeper: "Your clock is mistaken, Tinito. It say ten o'clock-with-a-half-hour-thrown-away; but the right time is eleven o'clock, for the sack wagon has just passed."

The pereoo pute was also the island's news medium. A newcomer might have wondered how old Tama-woman, who lived near the end of the route, knew, on the very next day, that her husband in Papeete, sixty kilometres away, had taken young Turia to the cinema. The sack wagon was to blame, for when it rushed past Tama-woman's house at thirty miles an hour, banging, rattling, backfiring, horn tooting and accordion rasping, passengers singing and roadside dogs barking, old Tei-woman, on the truck, screeched the whole story through the din and clatter, and old Tama-woman, in her house a hundred yards from the road, heard every word of it! Not a detail was lost: the color of Turia's dress, the bottle of beer they drank during the intermission, their seats in the cinema, and the red necktie her erring spouse bought particularly for the occasion.

But Tama-woman is not vexed. She is going through one of the exultant experiences that bring spice to her otherwise monotonous life. She puts on the blackest of her dresses, and, with her little tin of native tobacco tucked under her arm, walks leisurely from one end of the village to the other, casually mentioning the disgraceful affair, embellishing, accentuating.

Tama-woman ends her story by saying: "Many a new dress will I make my husband buy before he hears the end of this! He shall rise every morning to make coffee and go to the Chinaman's for bread! He shall wash the clothes and sweep out the house until all the neighbors ridicule him!" With a malicious sparkle in her eyes she concludes: "If you happen to be near my house tomorrow when he comes home, you will see what you will see!"

All the neighbors nod their heads sympathetically. Tomorrow they will be at her house, casually visiting, inquiring for a stray pig, cutting hibiscus shoots for their gardens, waiting for the pereoo pute and to see what they will see.

Upon this institution, the sack wagon, Mauu proposed to take me to the district of Vaiiti.

Tahitian Relatives

At the first sign of daylight fat genial Mauu woke me and we walked to the market, where, after a cup of coffee, we inspected the various conveyances that made the rounds of the districts. We decided on the sack wagon, for it was the most dignified, with its little tricolor flag on the radiator and its driver dressed in a white coat and a yachtsman's cap.

Mauu explained that only the simple people rode on the other trucks: ordinary fry who took no pride in riding through the districts wearing new straw hats and smoking Rosette cigarettes in bamboo holders. He further explained that it was a matter of family pride to have a good seat on the truck, and to shout a cheery yet dignified "May you live, everybody! Come and eat!" to every acquaintance in the eight districts.

That morning there were two Chinamen and a poor man on the back seat. On the next one sat three wild youths and a pretty girl of sixteen, the latter lost in folds on folds of pink muslin that stretched from her toes to her ears. Next was the seat of honor, where sat two elderly and pompous natives in white trousers and black coats, Mauu, and myself. In front of us, with the driver, two cheerful girls and a middle-aged woman chatted self-consciously.

Before we were out of Papeete, Mauu and the two natives on the seat of honor were talking as though they had been close friends since childhood.

"Big money, the fish in the market this morning," Mauu said, arching his eyebrows. "Fifteen francs a string for grouper, and everybody buying beef because it is cheaper. I bought two strings of grouper, though, for I never eat beef!"

In my mind's ear I heard a tacit "Ahem!"

First elderly man, evidently a village parson: "There are plenty of fish in my district of Paea. I never waste my money in the market as the Papeete people do!"

Second elderly man, a fisherman: "Nor I. We men of the district of Papara do not worry about buying fish. We are the ones who sell them!"

I wondered how Mauu would reply, for I knew he had a ready wit. Without flickering an eyelash, he cried: "Ay, yes; you fishermen! It is lucky

for you that there are rich men like me to buy your fish, otherwise you would all be paupers like the poor fellow on the back seat with the Chinamen. Men like me make you rich enough to sit up here on the seat of honor!”

Everybody laughed, including the poor fellow on the back seat. He piped in a feeble voice: “You on the front seat with all your money are like white men. Ha, ha! But I am a child of Tahiti! I catch my own fish and eat them raw with my own coconut sauce and my own plantains! I pay no money for the food of Tahiti, for I am a child of Tahiti and its food is my food!”

“Parau mau, ruau, parau mau!” several people shouted. (True speech, old man, true speech.) The poor fellow sat up a trifle straighter at that, and began a long harangue about the proper attitude for a “child of Tahiti” but soon the young girl in front of him unceremoniously told him to be quiet, which he meekly did, and again the conversation was taken up by Mauu and his companions.

Turning a bend in the road, we saw a little man, stooped with age, hobbling from his thatch-and-wattle hut. In the middle of the road he stopped, faced us, took off his red cap, and waved it, like some old-fashioned grandma signaling a streetcar to stop. When within hailing distance we heard him shouting above the chug of the engine: “Stop, sack wagon, stop!”

When the truck had pulled up before him, he stumbled to the driver in a great flurry. I felt vaguely alarmed, believing that he was about to report some catastrophe: the washout of a bridge, a house burned down, even a death. I was surprised when he had gained his breath sufficiently to gasp, “What is the news from Papeete?”

The driver replied that there was no news, and in turn asked the old man what news there was in his district of Punaauia.

“There is no news whatsoever,” the old man replied; then, with native contrariety, went on: “But Deacon Tai died last night, Moe-woman has had another child,—that’s five now, and all daughters,—three people are to join the church tomorrow, and the entire vanilla crop is dying!”

While speaking, the old man produced a tiny package. “Take this thing to Teriihoaiaterai a Teahopuu, who is known as Taa,” he said, mouthing the vowels as though he were washing out his mouth with orange beer. “She lives in the third house on the mountain side of the road after the fourth

bridge beyond the house of Manuatuahia Tavanarahi a Reretuahaiti, who is known as Mou. His house is three houses this side of the Papara schoolhouse... . No—not that schoolhouse, but the one that Tehoroiripo-woman cleans every Saturday afternoon. By the way, she is a relative of mine! But the schoolhouse cannot be seen from the road; it is the one ...”

“I know the schoolhouse,” the driver said.

“Take this thing to Teriihoaiaterai ...” he started all over again, but the driver interrupted him with a gruff, “All right, old man, I’ll take this thing to the woman that is known as Taa.”

Then the old man asked: “How much for carrying this very small package for this very poor old man who gets fee-fee fever when the wind blows from the south?”

“Fifty centimes,” the driver replied.

The old man fumbled in his pocket until he produced a two-franc piece; then the driver fumbled until he found he had no change, when it was decided that the old man should pay at some other time—and all this while the engine had been chugging away, burning up fifty-cents-a-gallon gasoline. But at last we left the old man and bumped over the dirt road toward the house of Teriihoaiaterai a Teahopuu, who is known as Taa.

Presently Mauu asked, as though speaking to some imaginary person directly in front of him: “Who is that thing, that old man?”

The parson, sitting up and clearing his throat in the established clerical manner: “Ah, now let us see. I know the family. Did you ever hear of Opuraino of Tautira? He has been dead these fifty years.”

The large middle-aged lady on the front seat volunteered: “Yes; I know all about that man because there is a child in my district of Pueu that will have a share in the lands that Opuraino owned—that is, if the child’s mother can prove that she is a legitimate daughter of Paatia-woman, who got an interest in these lands by marrying Opuraino’s grandson, who is called Haavii.”

The men glanced disparagingly at the large woman. How dare she attempt to unravel the complex genealogy of a Tahitian! The parson spoke next:—

“Opuraino had six brothers and three sisters and eighteen children, but one of the latter died shortly after birth—don’t forget that, for I will show later that it is of great importance. Also, he had three wives whose names were ...”

I glanced from the truck while the genealogy of Opuraino was being carried down to the man in the red cap. We were passing through Papara, and I could see across a mile of rice paddies where the mountains rose in dark and sinister cliffs, broken by waterfalls and light green clumps of bamboo jungle. The paddies were beautiful in the early morning light: an unbroken stretch of pale green rippling under the breeze from the mountains. At the far side of the paddies the yellow rice was ready for harvesting, while to the near side, in unplanted paddies, Chinamen were working, three of them with great hoes, a fourth with an ox-drawn plough.

The animal plodded belly-deep in the mud; he needed no reins; year after year he had done this monotonous work and his spirit was broken. The Chinamen seemed to work as phlegmatically as the beast.

From the paddies the road wound through plantations of every imaginable tropic food. A few native and Chinese huts were scattered among the groves and gardens. We passed a woman in an open cookhouse kindling a fire for her oven; a man feeding his pigs coconuts, bananas, alligator pears; and, farther along, a Chinaman setting out his racks of tobacco to dry in the sun. Still farther on a very old native, squatting in the doorway of his hut. He was so old that even the pereoo pute could not rouse him from his dreams.

We entered a forest of coconut trees that joined their fronds above the road. A Chinaman's bread cart was drawn up at one side of the road to let us pass. Beyond, a flock of ducks waddled clumsily toward a river; and there was a house surrounded by scarlet hibiscus, and the lagoon, visible in dashes of blue.

My attention returned to the dispute. The parson was saying: "And he is a second cousin of the old man who stopped the pereoo pute, whose name, incidentally, is Maiao. But Maiao is only a second cousin by marriage, mind you. Just start back from Tetua-woman—the one who went to jail for stealing eggs from the Hitiaa Chinaman... ."

I glanced from the truck again, reflecting that it was no wonder Mauu found so many relatives—or they found him—to fill his long table at the Tiare. Then I dismissed Tahitian relatives from my mind, for we were passing a Chinaman's shop with its usual group of village loafers on the porch, and the Chinaman himself standing in the doorway, grinning foolishly.

“It is remarkable,” I thought, “that the Chinamen on this island smile perpetually. At home we look upon them as an apathetic undemonstrative people; but here they seem always happy!”

A pretty girl left the store to poke her finger in the Chinaman’s ribs; drawn up beside his porch was a cart piled high with coconuts; the bread wagon we had passed was probably his; his cattle grazed in the near-by fields; pigs grunted and fattened in the sties behind his shop; his books showed that everyone in the district owed him money, while he owed no one. Surely Tahiti is a promised land for the Canton coolie.

Everybody was talking at once when again I turned my attention to my fellow passengers; even the poor fellow on the back seat had something to say. (I gathered that he was telling the others that Opuraino was his grandfather; but no one paid him the least attention, for what could a man who sat on the back seat know about such matters, even though he were a close relative?) The parson became quite excited when he exclaimed:—

“But I tell you that Tioti a Taaroa was the foster father of the man who stopped the truck, and his name was Faapaapaa before his second marriage. Now, to find his real father we must start way back from Parau-Rearea, who was so called because of his famous bonito hook... .”

I began to realize that the passengers had only started on their favorite subjects of fetii, and that it would not be exhausted until the truck had come to the end of its route. I also began to understand the reason for the common native phrase: “E fetii ona naa’u” (He is a relative of mine).

Presently we stopped before the Mataeia policeman’s house. He was the postman for the district. To-day he was working in his garden (in an unofficial capacity) when we came up; and he paid us no attention until we had stopped and sounded the horn several times. Then he straightened up, glanced inquiringly at us, and, “Ah! The sack wagon!” he exclaimed.

The driver switched off the engine, leaned back, and lit a cigarette. It was some moments before the policeman finished his gardening and walked leisurely into his house; and fully five minutes more before he returned (this time in his official capacity), wearing his white coat with red bands round the sleeves and dozens of brass buttons, and his police cap with its gold braid. He was swinging a great iron key in one hand. On reaching the truck he shook hands with everybody, asked for the news from Papeete, and, unlocking the mail box, which was carried on one of the running boards, took out all the letters and read the addresses in a loud tone. Those for his

district he laid on top of the box, one by one, commenting on them so the passengers could have a new subject for gossip. I remember one in particular, a big, official-looking envelope. The policeman studied it with knitted brows before he decided that it might contain a notice of conscription of native troops!

We were all alarmed at this. By the time we had reached the next kilometre stone it was decided, and then shouted to people along the road, that France was about to declare another war, and that all the young men of Tahiti would have to become soldiers! The excitement had reached a high pitch when we reached the boundary of Vaiiti; but it was forgotten abruptly when we ran over a fowl, and then the fowl's owner was speculated on until gradually the passengers had returned to their favorite topic of kith and kin.

Mauu and I left the truck at the fifty-second kilometre stone and walked to a clearing a hundred yards from the road. There we found a little old lady in a black dress and a funny grandma hat squatting in her cookhouse close to the river, while on the water's edge a charming girl of about sixteen washed clothes by beating them with a stick. She was dressed in a strip of red and white cloth about her waist, and her breasts were bare.

The old lady looked up with a gentle smile when we approached. "Ah!" she exclaimed, nodding her head wisely. "A white man! I must tell Tuahu!"

"Yes," Mauu replied, "and this white man has bought my valuable land of Hitireia for fifty thousand francs! His name is Ropati. Where is Tuahu?"

"Tuahu has gone to the valley for fei," she said; then abruptly, as a light came into her old eyes, "Tell me, has the pereoo pute passed?"

"Yes," Mauu replied; "we have just come on it."

"Dear me, dear me!" the old lady mumbled.

"So the sack wagon has passed. It must be time for me to kindle a fire in my oven. Soon the children will be back from school!" Then she raised her voice to summon the girl at the river, whom she called Terii, and immediately after she was telling Mauu that he and the white man must eat there that day.

"It is Reretu, Tuahu's wife," Mauu told me as we turned from the cookhouse and followed a weed-grown trail to the lagoon. "Tuahu is one fine old man. He will be good to you... . He is a relative of mine."

Not many days had passed before I too could say that Tuahu was a fine old man ... and that he was a relative of mine.

Tuahu

The land Mauu sold me was only a few fathoms wide on the beach; but it ran mountainward through a jungle of lemon, hibiscus, island chestnuts, and coconut groves. The house was of bamboo and coconut thatch. Facing the lagoon, it seemed to work its way into the jungle until it was difficult to tell where the house ended and the jungle began. A few coconuts leaned seaward on either side of my native mansion; there were clumps of bananas, and between the house and the beach a bountiful alligator pear that broke the full force of the trade wind.

Though no one, white or native, lived on that stretch of beach, I could see my brown neighbors fishing patiently in their strange ways, unmindful of the hot sun. Day after day I watched them from my verandah, lazily, sleepily, only half aware that they were there at all, until one of them, hooking a big fish, startled me with his high yodeling call. Then there would be a moment's animation, and if Tuahu was there he would lean forward to watch the fisherman hauling in his line, and to speculate on what kind of finned thing had got foul of the hook.

For three years I lived on that cool, quiet verandah. There I would sit back in a steamer chair, my feet on the railing, drowsily listening to the distant mutter of the reef combers; and sometimes thinking of the restless life I had left, thus better to enjoy my repose. My verandah was conducive to laziness. Perhaps it was the mere comfort of the steamer chairs, or the sedative effect of the trade wind passing gently below the thatch, laden with the soporific fragrance of tropic vegetation. Or it may have been the sea. She splashed upon the white coral beach, lisping: "This is all I have to do! This is all I have to do!" And Tuahu and I, leaning back even more luxuriously, replied: "Yes; but we have nothing at all to do!"

In those days Tuahu was a man past the prime of life, but still strong and full of youthful enthusiasm. He called me his son,—i tau tamaiti,—as did his wife, Reretu; and both treated me with such generosity that often I felt ashamed to accept their presents of mountain plantains, fish, native food from Reretu's oven. But to have refused their gifts would have caused them

real pain, so I did my best to make returns by giving them pieces of print and European food from the village Chinaman's shop.

One morning, a few months after my arrival, I woke to the realization that Tuahu had not visited me since the preceding Sunday. He was hamaa about something, I felt certain.

Hamaa is a common word in Vaiti. One heard it scores of times daily, and learned that it meant something between ashamed and embarrassed. Tuahu, being a native of the old school, proud of his race, was as sensitive as he was generous; and it occurred to me that the reason for his three days' absence might be that he had given to one of his numerous relatives the new bush knife I had given him, and was ashamed. That was precisely Tuahu's way. I had made him presents before, a sack of sugar, for instance, and later had said: "Tuahu, you are drinking no coffee this morning. Have you no sugar left?"

Then the old man had become very hamaa. His gentle eyes had become troubled as he muttered apologetically: "My son, it is like this: Pauoto, my brother-in-law, was here yesterday, and he mentioned that he had no sugar, so I told him to take a little of mine. But Pauoto, as you know, is a stupid fellow, and instead of taking a little he took the whole bag... . But don't let this trouble you, Ropati. I shall go to the mountains for plantains soon, and when I have sold them in the Papeete market there will be plenty of sugar for us all."

Then, to pacify me, he brought from the folds of his pareu a beautiful ruvettus hook made from ironwood, and told me how to bait it, and spoke of the great sharp-fanged oilfish that always swim downward when they bite, thus freeing themselves from an iron hook, but never from a V-shaped wooden one.

"And when the trade wind blows again, Ropati," he said, "we will go, you and I, and fish for those big fellows."

It was impossible to be angry with Tuahu, he was so kindly, so generous, so thoughtless of himself. He had nothing of his own, for there was always some remote family connection who needed his possessions more than he. I often thought of him as a Polynesian Will Wimble. He did not make whiplashes or garters, but he was busy from morning till night laying hibiscus rope for old Toto to tether his horse with, polishing pearl-shell hooks for the bonito fishing, whittling popguns and bows and arrows for his adopted son, Tomi. Often, having made him a present of sugar or

coffee, I have gone to his house the following morning to find his long table set with bowls for eighteen or twenty persons, a gasoline tin half full of coffee on the fire and a crowd of natives waiting to partake of the morning meal. But Tuahu, seeing me coming, would remember an important errand far down the road, and leave Mama-Reretu to welcome me.

“Well, well,” she would exclaim, “it is Ropati! May you live, my son! Come, coffee is ready; you are just in time!” Then we would all sit down; and when we were half through the meal Tuahu would return to slip quietly into his place at the head of the table, and soon to forget that he had been terribly hamaa, in his pleasure in being host to so many friends and relatives. I might have searched the island over without finding such kindly neighbors as these.

Their house stood on a grassy bank by the river; and to one side of it, about fifty yards away, there was a large mango tree where Reretu loved to sit during the heat of the day, smoking native tobacco rolled in pandanus leaf and plaiting straw hats for Tuahu and her many nephews and nieces. In the early morning she could always be found weeding and cultivating her pineapples. She took great pride in her little pineapple garden, though I doubt if she often tasted the fruit. Some of it was for punch at the feasts when all the family came to partake of her hospitality; some for me; some for the old man who lived on Motuovini Point. She had it all divided long before it was ripe.

Terii and Tomi lived with Tuahu and Mama-Reretu—but they, and Old Bill, deserve a chapter to themselves.

On this particular morning I found Mama-Reretu hard at work.

“Iaorana, Mama!” I called as I entered the clearing from the riverside path. “Where is Tuahu? I have not seen him since Sunday.”

“Ah, my son,” she replied with just the proper note of indignation. “You remember the lovely bush knife you have Tuahu? Well, my brother, Pauoto, saw it and asked if he might borrow it. Of course Tuahu let him have it; and as it has not been returned—and never will be returned for the matter—Tuahu is hamaa. He has gone up the valley to pick oranges today—or so he says, for I think he is really hiding from you!”

It was a glorious day, clear and cool, just the kind of day for a valley excursion. So I went to the Chinaman’s shop, bought two bottles of wine, a tin of beef, and a loaf of bread, and started in search of Tuahu. I found him in a grove of oranges about ten kilometres up the valley. He had gathered a

great mound of fruit which gleamed like a heap of gold in the green gloom of the valley. Now he was seated with his back against a tree plaiting baskets to carry the fruit.

His face lighted up when he saw me, and soon we were in the midst of one of our interminable conversations. Not a word was said about the bush knife. I knew very well that he was hamaa because he had given away another of my gifts, and he knew that I knew it, so we talked of everything but that.

"I am glad I have found you, Tuahu," I said; then hesitated, racking my brain for some topic that would interest him, while he lowered his head in confusion, certain that I would speak of the knife. Then I thought of something: "I have been wanting to make a valley excursion, and Reretu told me I should find you here; but I came particularly to ask you how to catch the great mara fish I have often seen along the coral banks."

A twinkle came into the old man's eyes. He knew I was lying, and he was thankful for it. After all, one does not walk ten kilometres up the valley to talk about fishing. He drew a sigh of relief, glanced up happily, and said:

"Yes; the mara. We natives seldom bother him, for often he is poisonous. He is a lazy fellow, seldom found in deep water where he would have to match his strength against sharks and swordfish. You must fish for him only during the few moments when the tide is slack, and then with an immense hook baited with a live land crab. This you lower so it will fall on the sand a few feet in front of your mara, where he is sleeping in the shadows of a coral cliff; and then you start throwing chum of land-crab claws into the water until slack tide, when, if he feels hungry, the mara will take your hook. He will pull gently at first; but when he feels the barb in his mouth he will put his laziness aside and show himself to be the most powerful fish in the sea. If your canoe is small he will sink it, and if your line is weak it will break. If you play him he will swim into a cave and tangle your line, and if you hold tight, more than likely he will carry your canoe far to sea before you land him."

"And when once you get him home and cooked," I volunteered, "he will poison you. He's certainly a no-good fellow."

"He may not be as poisonous as the young fishermen say," Tuahu murmured slyly.

Once started talking about fishing, Tuahu forgot that he had been hamaa. He went on to tell me more about the mara, and how once he had been pulled miles to sea by one, and had been caught there in a long squall that had driven him farther away, and had not got home until the next day—but he had landed his mara, and it had not been poisonous, as were the uncaught fish that the young fishermen were too lazy to catch. He had come to the end of this story when we heard dogs helping far up the valley.

Tuahu sprang to his feet at once. “Wild pig! Come, Ropati, we will feast this day!”

A moment later he disappeared among the trees. I followed at a more leisurely pace with the two bottles of wine, the beef, and the bread. When again I joined him, a mile farther on, he had the pig killed and more than half cleaned. Three mangy dogs were gobbling up the entrails with revolting zest. Tuahu slung the carcass over his shoulder. “Let us go to the bamboo grove,” he said. “There we will cook this fellow and eat at our leisure; and we can return to the village in the cool of the evening.”

The bamboo grove stood on a broad and fairly level slope near the head of the valley. Close by was a large overhanging rock blackened by the smoke of innumerable fires. It was almost a cave, and one could sleep there in the rainiest weather, but today there was not a cloud in the sky. The wood which I gathered for the fire kindled at once into flame. Meanwhile Tuahu had cut up the pig and gathered some mountain plantains—large red bananas that grow only on the steep sides of the valleys. When the wood under the stones of the native oven had fallen away to glowing coals, he laid the food on the hot stones and covered it with layer on layer of hibiscus leaves, and these, in turn, with a mound of fresh earth; and when this was done we bathed in a pool under a waterfall, and then reclined in the deep shade to wait until our meal should be ready.

It was rather a feast than a meal, and I should be reluctant to say how much of the pig we ate. It was deliciously baked and had a rich gamy flavor. And we opened the beef and, having let it simmer on the coals, ate that too, and dipped our plantains into the rich gravy in the bottom of the tin. We ate in silence and sipped our wine out of bamboo cups, enjoying the profound noonday stillness. It was easy to imagine that we were the only men who had ever come to this place, or ever would come. I thought how strange it was that I should be there at all; how swiftly these months had slipped by; how remote and shadowy the world I used to know seemed to me now, and

the friends of former days and the places where I had worked. Tuahu, as well, was sorting over old memories, for after a long silence he said:—

“When I was a wild youth we often came to this very place to make orange beer. We would bring a barrel and two large tins which had contained the hard bread the traders used to sell. Then we would fill the tins with wild honey, and, gathering oranges, peel them and squeeze the juice into the barrel and then mix it with the honey. And if we wanted a very fine beer we brought one hundred young coconuts and poured the water from them into the barrel. Finally we would leave an old man here with food to last him for ten days. He would sleep under this rock and every morning and evening he would stir and skim the beer; and when it was ready he would come down to tell us.

“Then all the men in the district came into the valley, save only the white missionary, and old Tomo, whose legs were so big with fee-fee that he could not walk. And the women came too, and the children, bringing fish and taro, breadfruit, suckling pigs, coconuts, chickens, all the food from the sea and the land. And while the men were preparing ovens—many of them such as the one in which we cooked our pig—the women filled gourds with miti-hue and other coconut sauces so that everyone could have the sauce which pleased him best.

“When we had eaten our fill we drank the orange beer and told stories of the olden times, while the children swam in the river and speared shrimps and the little nato fish. And at night the forest would be ablaze with bamboo torches, and there would be dancing and singing and love-making.”

Tuahu was silent for a long time, smoking placidly, his thoughts in the past. I tried to reconstruct in imagination the scenes of those high feasts of thirty or more years ago. At length Tuahu said:—

“Now the young men come here no more; they sit in the Chinaman’s shop to play foreign songs on the accordion, to eat bread cakes and food from tins. They dance as the white men dance, and the ancient ways are forgotten. How worthless they are, the young men of today! Few can tell you the names of the plants of their own valleys, or of the eight winds, or of the stars or the fish or the birds. It is only when I think of my youth that I see how great the change has been.”

It was still early in the afternoon when we rose to leave; but the shadows had crept far up the valley wall, and in the grove of island chestnuts by the river the gloom was almost that of deep night. Tuahu

packed the remnants of wild pig in sections of bamboo, for large though our appetites had been there was still a great deal of food uneaten. We stopped at the orange grove, where we filled the baskets with fruit, and, covering them with water grass, left them to be brought down in the morning. Reretu was just opening the native oven when we arrived at the house.

“Aue!” she cried when she saw the roasted pork. “But we have too much food!” She turned to her little adopted son: “Tomi, run quickly to Faatomo’s house and tell him that he must eat with us! And tell Faiipo and Pauoto too!” Then to us: “I have a surprise for you. See,” as she took the last leaves from the oven, “an albacore! Pauoto was fishing this morning and he caught two!”

“Pauoto ... ?” Tuahu muttered and stopped short, looking at me uneasily.

“Lord!” I thought. “He is still thinking about the bush knife! He is going to be hamaa again!” So I took the old man to one side. “Tuahu,” I said, “you’d better give Pauoto something in return for so fine a gift as this fish... . That bush knife I gave you ... perhaps it would please him, if you think you could spare it.”

His face brightened at once. “Our thoughts as as one, Ropati,” he replied. “Yes, surely I shall give him the knife, since you suggest it... . You see, he is my brother-in-law... . You understand?”

I nodded my head gravely.

Three Vaiiti Characters

Old Bill was a garrulous, irascible myna bird, the unquestioned leader of his flock. He gave me many a laugh as he dashed here and there, keeping his fellow birds in a continual state of noisy disorder. I have little sentimental love for birds. The death of a meadow lark leaves me cold; the “full-throated” song of a “light-winged dryad of the trees” bores me; I cannot sympathize with those who go into ecstasies over a nest of robins. But a noisy row of black crows perched on the ridge of a barn; a heron, effigy of evil, stalking down the beach with his head popping out and then bobbing back to be all but lost between his shoulder blades; a war-worn rooster, scarred in many battles for the love of hens—these, and a flock of obstreperous myna birds, fill me with delight.

Old Bill was a rare soul, one of Vaiiti’s leading characters. He seemed to be everywhere at the same time: cadging grated coconut from Reretu’s fowls, and fighting them successfully if need be; perched on the back of the Chinaman’s pig, preening his feathers and clacking his sentiments to the unsympathetic sky. And if one walked a mile down the beach, there Old Bill would be, in the midst of a circle of fifty screaming birds, refereeing a fight between two lady mynas, perhaps fighting himself and adding a few more scars to his already war-damaged head and breast.

Old Bill roosted with his brethren in the great alligator-pear tree near my house. They went to roost as noisily as possible; but after night had set in they were quiet for a time. Then it was Bill who gave the alarm when a rat climbed the tree or a pig passed harmlessly beneath. I knew his nasal danger signal. Invariably it was followed by a bedlam of voices, each one piping a distinct call of his own; then, abruptly, silence for a few moments, after which Bill would have the last word. He would croak sleepily: “Shut up your racket! Shut up your racket!” and then, I imagine, tuck his head under his wing and go to sleep. This occurred half a dozen times during the night, his last attempt at self-expression coming at about five in the morning. Often I would lie awake listening for it. Outside my window a barely audible clicking among the leaves told of two hermit crabs gallivanting under the false-coffee hedge. Sometimes they were very

annoying, keeping me awake with their faint click-click until in a rage I would go outside to hunt for them and throw them far into the lagoon. I did not care to kill them: they were too much a part of Vaiiti life. Louder noises did not bother me. I seldom heard the rumble of the surf unless heavy seas were on the reef, or the wind had died down and the roar reverberated deafeningly on the still water. I was only vaguely aware of the wind's countless sounds: its moaning in the hedge, sibilant whispering through the mosquito screening across the window, steady murmur in the palm fronds and the pear tree, or the tinkling sound it made when it blew across the coral gravel, moving it slightly.

Abruptly these night noises are silenced by the throaty and discordant crow of a rooster. I wait five minutes, and then comes, with wild and hilarious abandonment, the raucous haw-haw-haw, screech, yawl, and blatter of Old Bill, followed by the clamorous pandemonium of all his evil flock: a hideous babble of multisonous tongues from the alligator-pear tree.

I roll out of bed. It is just dawn. Old Bill has started another Vaiiti day for me.

Tuahu's adopted son, Tomi, vied with Old Bill as an interesting character. For some time it was difficult to gain the husky little rogue's confidence; then one day I made him a pushcart and demonstrated it before his bewildered eyes. At first he would not touch the thing; he eyed it suspiciously, like a fish circling a bait before biting. Then he gave it a little push. It responded. Slowly a smile crossed Tomi's chubby brown face; and after another tentative push or two he was scampering up the trail to the village, and down to Tuahu's house, and along the beach, filling the cart with coconut husks and dumping them in my front yard. For several mornings thereafter, when the Chinaman came along in his bread wagon, one could see Tomi in his wake, proudly pushing his cart and calling: "Faraoa! Faraoa! Aita tarahu!" (Bread! Bread! No credit!)

It was not long before Tomi demonstrated that his confidence in me was increasing. Often we paddled into the lagoon with a half-dozen youngsters, to a shoal sandy bank, and there, wearing water goggles, searched the sprays of antler coral for the vividly blue South Sea demoiselles and the triggerfish with their scaleless skins painted like futuristic canvases.

On one such expedition he showed me a snail that actually jumped! Laid in the canoe, the snail stretched out a brown fin-shaped thing resembling a miniature fluke of a turtle, and with a quick flip bounced

himself several inches in the air. For several days after that we collected these jumping snails, took them to the beach, and, laying them in a row on the sand, watched them jump races to the water. I am afraid that I led Tomi and his companions into evil ways, for often the betting ran high, though none of the wagers was ever paid.

One afternoon when the rest of the children had scattered down the beach, Tomi edged up to me, and, talking through one side of his mouth while the other remained closed, a habit he had acquired from the movie villains, he said: “Faraia tiamu,” which means, “Bread and jam.”

I glanced toward Reretu, who was on my verandah plaiting a mat. She did not object to my giving Tomi bread and jam, but she objected to Tomi’s being a nuisance, and whenever I gave him anything she took it for granted that he was being a nuisance. But now her mind was on her work, or perhaps her song, for she was singing softly to herself as her nimble old fingers interlaced the strands of leaf. So I slipped into the cookhouse, cut a thick slice of bread, and plastered it with jam.

Outside again, I said to Tomi: “Come, let us walk,” and then strode off on a little-used path into the groves, Tomi at my heels.

When we were a safe distance away, I told him to keep the incident under his hat; then gave him the faraoa tiamu.

From that day he became an inseparable companion, and a pleasant one too. Each morning he followed me on my three-mile walk, and though I had to carry him at times, I did not mind, for the walk was for exercise. And what a running conversation fell from one side of his mouth! He proved as garrulous as the old myna bird himself. As he followed me I would hear:

“Ropati, go a little slower. Don’t you see that I’ve got only one shoe? My papa won’t give me but one. It don’t fit either, because it’s his; and it’s got a hole in the bottom of it. It’s hard to walk with only one shoe.” And later: “Oh, Ropati, wait a minute. Terii’s got a new sweetheart. It’s Tuanoa, the man that swiped all the chickens from the Chinaman. He gives Terii a whole chicken sometimes. That’s why Terii like him. Nobody knows nothing about it but me. Why don’t you make Terii your sweetheart, Ropati? Papa won’t mind your giving her chickens... . Oh, look! There’s Pauoto’s old mother hunting land crabs. She can’t hear, Ropati, can’t hear nothing at all, not even when you go ‘whoop!’ in her ear.”

And so on. All the gossip of Vaiiti would come out of the corner of his mouth with an odd intonation much better suited to an older person. Several

times I mentioned some of Tomi's odd bits of gossip to Tuahu, and when he asked me from whence they came, I was obliged to admit that Tomi had been my informant. I am afraid my foster father must have thought me rather childish; but I will stand up for Tomi: his information proved more reliable than much one receives from an older person, and certainly it was given with less malice.

I sat on the beach under the star to smoke a cigarette and feel the mountain wind blowing against my bare chest. It was like a caress; like the soft fine hair of a woman. I could hear the distant roar of combers breaking on Vaiiti reef, and close at my feet the splashing of little waves on the coral gravel. There was a susurrant among the leaves of the alligator-pear tree, and from somewhere far inland came the strange harmony of the himene singers.

Four figures broke from the shadows to the left of the house. They were Tomi and one of his companions, pretty sixteen-year-old Terii, and a younger girl. One of the boys carried a ukulele. They sat on the sand beside me, without any sign of embarrassment, and started an animated conversation, telling me all kinds of gossip about husbands who had been unfaithful to their mistresses by sleeping with their wives, and so forth. Children of Tahiti! God bless them! They knew all about such matters before they knew their ABC's. Then the boy with the ukulele struck a few chords, and with a volatile rush of spirits they started singing:

Titoutou mai te vahine Vaiiti
Mei te manu rai pitate.
Pitate, pitate, pitate—tate—tate.

(Graceful is the Vaiiti maiden,
Like the great bird, a peacock.
A peacock, a peacock, a peacock—peacock—peacock.)

Tomi and the two girls jumped to their feet, and as the ukulele player strummed the strings they danced with the peculiar abandon of the Tahitian village children.

Abruptly the player struck up another rhythm. Little Tomi leaped in front of the two girls, and as he knocked his knees together and moved his hips and shoulders in time with the music, all the children sang:

Te vahine roa ei!
Te vahine poto ei!
Te hia ra oe, te vahinepoto?
U'a, u'a, teterevete
Paru, paru, teterevete, ah!

(Oh, the little short girl, ah!
Oh, the great big tall girl, ah!
Where can be my sweet little short girl?
Pliant, pliant, like the velvet;
Supple, supple, like the velvet, ah!
Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah—ah!)

Terii danced with wild abandon, giving me the impression that there was something ritual in each motion of her graceful body. There was not the effect of effort that one usually notices in young dancers; she danced as she would play, as though it were the most natural thing in the world—as though, perhaps, there were something more profound, a magic or an enchantment, in her movements. Presently the other two children sat before her, and as the ukulele player warmed to his music she danced alone, unaware of her audience, oblivious of everything but the rhythm of music and graceful motion.

The waning moon had risen above the coconut trees to cast long shadow patterns on the beach and touch the lagoon with a dull silver sheen. The yellow light shimmered in the loose hair that rippled down Terii's back. She was very beautiful, I thought ... too young and delicate a creature to touch, and yet ... Then I began to think how fantastic it was that the same world should hold cities and armed men, and this strange and beautiful creature. Only a score of miles away was Papeete with its scheming traders, grasping officials, Chinese slum; while farther away was civilization, where the fundamental beauties of life had been lost ages ago.

It was late when Tomi left with two of his companions. Terii and I went into the house, and throwing a mat on the floor we slept with our heads to the open doorway; and I dreamed, that night, that all the beauty of Vaiti was real and not the dream that it had appeared in waking hours.

Let Us Sing

In sleepy Vaiiti village there was an old man named Toto whose house stood in the shade of a great hibiscus tree near the river. He was very old and very lonely, for his wife was dead and his children had long since married and gone elsewhere to live. Throughout the week Toto was rarely to be seen away from his house. He would sit, hour after hour, leaning against the hibiscus tree, lost in reverie, heedless of the passage of time or the shouts of children sailing their boats of breadfruit leaves over the rippling water. But early of a Sunday evening he would put on a black pareu and a coat of white drill which Oura-woman had washed and ironed for him, and walk slowly along the grass-grown village street, chanting in a high quavering voice:

“E himene tatou i teie po!” (We will sing tonight!)

Then he would blow a clear call on the conch shell he carried slung over his shoulder by a cord of sinnet.

My house was more than a mile from the village, but I could always hear the mellow summons from Toto’s conch shell, even above the booming of the surf along the barrier reef. On windless nights when the sea was calm the air became vibrant with the sound, and I could all but see the waves of it spreading farther and farther to the utmost boundaries of the district.

Sometimes I walked to the village for a Sunday-night chat with the chief, Atua, and his wife; and at such times I would see Toto passing by, as stiff and important as his old back would permit, dimly outlined in the gathering dusk, chanting his weekly summons: “We will sing tonight! We will sing tonight!”

“Ah!” Tetuanui, the chief’s wife, would then exclaim. “There may be singing tonight.” And her sister-in-law would reply: “Yes, perhaps—perhaps it is Sunday,” as though it had only at that moment occurred to her and she had not heard Toto’s call at all. Then the little group would sit rocking silently for a long interval, when Tetuanui would at last ask, perfunctorily:

“Are you going to the himene?”

Nui-woman: “How should I know?”

Tetuanui: "I am sure I do not know."

That settled the matter; no further speech was necessary. Both women had made up their minds to go and in their own way had said as much.

Toto shared his duties as town crier with Oura-woman, a little witch of a person who was scarcely more than the embodiment of a voice. But such a voice! There was not its equal in the district, whether for range or for quality. It was clear, sweet; and one would need a Jacob's ladder of added lines to indicate on paper the limits of its upper register. One could hardly detect those highest notes, and no piccolo player could reach them, though he puckered his lips ever so much and closed one eye to boot. The droning of a gnat's wing would be a hoarse bass in comparison; and many a time, when Oura-woman was singing, my gross sensual ear could scarcely receive the swift vibrations of sound. And yet she was an old woman, a great-grandmother. Toto, for all his years, was but a wild youth when she was a stately matron nursing her second pair of twins.

No sooner had Toto started on his rounds of the district than Oura-woman appeared, dressed in her black Mother Hubbard, her black Sunday hat. She was barefoot, of course, and her hair, faintly streaked with gray, hung in a single braid to her waist. She moved as soundlessly as a spirit, looking neither to right nor to left, invisible in her sombre costume; and one might believe that it was only a ghost that had passed, calling other ghosts in a lonely wailing voice: "E himene tatou! E himene tatou!" (Let us sing! Let us sing!) The sound grew fainter and fainter, passing in the direction of the House of Gathering, and at length was heard no more.

The Fare Putu-Putu-Ra was the house where all public meetings were held: services for the dead, community song festivals, Sunday-evening gatherings. To that house Oura-woman went long before any of the others, and, sitting on the steps, invisible to passers-by, she sang her weird little melody, varying it from time to time as her fancy prompted her.

No one paid the slightest attention to this second summons; no one was expected to. Tetuanui and Nui-woman continued to savor together morsels of village gossip. Across the way I could hear Pauoto strumming his guitar, and farther down the road Taunoa playing his vivo (flute).

Presently Nui-woman heaved her immense body from the mat on the verandah and stumped to her own house near by, for her evening cup of tea and slice of bread. Tetuanui then retired to her outdoor kitchen, where she prepared tea of orange leaves for Atua and me. This we enjoyed in silence;

and when we had finished, Atua rose to light the lamp and place it on the floor. I was surprised to find Teriaa, Atua's son, lying at one side of the door, and several other of his children sitting on the steps. Certainly they were not there when I came in, and I did not see them enter. It was astonishing how soundlessly, unobtrusively, these island people moved.

"It is warm tonight," Atua said. He was now full in the lamplight, and, as many times before, I noticed his snowy-white hair, his dignified expression which could yet be genial.

"Yes," I replied; "it is warm tonight."

Silence again. We were old friends, the chief and I, and had no need for lengthy conversations. Presently his sister, Nui-woman, appeared, this time with her husband, Nui-man. She had changed her dress of print for a black one like that of Oura-woman. Tetuanui greeted her as though they were meeting for the first time in days:

"Well, it is Nui-woman! May you live! Where are you from and where are you going?"

And Nui-woman replied: "Perhaps it is Tetuanui? May you live! Why, I have come from down the road and I am going here and there." She sat down with a sigh. For a time there was no further talk; then:

Nui-woman: "I suppose you have no tobacco?"

Tetuanui: "Not any at all."

Tetuanui said this in a tone sorrowfully apologetic and convincing at the same time, and the implication was that if one were to search the house, looking into every corner and cranny, one would not find so much as a shred of tobacco.

"Ah," said Nui-woman, a shade of disappointment in her tone. She hummed a little refrain, but broke off in the midst of it... "But what ... perhaps ..." She reached in her voluminous bosom... "Ah, yes! I remember! I have some of my own!" And she brought out a packet, together with a strip of dried pandanus leaf for paper.

"But what am I thinking of!" then exclaimed Tetuanui. "How forgetful I am! Atua bought me some tobacco from the Chinaman only this morning. It is in the pahua shell there in the corner. Bring it to me, Teriaa; I too will smoke."

Nui-man said nothing. Atua said nothing; but, raising his eyes, he glanced at me for the fraction of a second, and I was reminded of just that kind of understanding glance from a man in a Fresno streetcar, when two

women sitting opposite us, bosom friends apparently, searched delayingly in their purses for the fare.

Meanwhile Oura-woman sat alone on the steps of the himene house, singing tirelessly her weird little song; and for a half hour at least no one heeded her. But at nine o'clock people began to pass. They came from mountainward and seaward, filing out of the footpaths into the village street, the men in white coats and blue denim trousers, the older women in black dresses and hats of dyed black straw; the girls in gay print dresses, their hair loose and shimmering, laughter on their lips.

"Perhaps there is a himene tonight," Tetuanui muttered presently; then, rising, she walked to the verandah railing to gaze abstractedly into the starlit sky.

"Yes; perhaps there is a himene," Nui-woman replied. "I will just change my dress and we will go and see."

"We will sing tonight! We will sing tonight!" The cry cut through the still night air.

The “Himene”

Nui-man, Atua, and I walked on in advance of the others to arrive at the himene house in time to see Toto opening the doors and lighting the lamps. Before long we took our places inside, among the dignified older people, while round the doorway and on the grassy plot in front of the Fare Putu-Putu-Ra gathered the tau-rearea—the husbandless girls and the wifeless youths, just as one sees them, or used to see them, loitering about church doors in small country towns at home. Here, too, seated on the steps, were the people of no social standing, and those who took only a nominal part in the singing, joining the choruses now and then, but for the most part sorting over the gossip for the week, picking out choice morsels of scandal for lengthy discussion. The children were everywhere, little Tomi among them, in the trees, rolling in the grass, running races along the road, holding impromptu choruses of their own when three or four of them rested for a moment from their play.

Within doors the singers arranged themselves as carefully as though they were members of an orchestra. Forming a large semicircle at the rear were the maru-haruru—the young men who did little singing, but who kept time for the rest by swaying their bodies and chanting in deep undertones:

“Ugh! Ugh! Ugh! Ugh! Ugh! Ugh! Ugh! Aye, ah! Aye, ah! Aye, ah, ah, ah!”

Sometimes they took a minor part in the songs, a refrain of two or three bars, weird and beautiful; and I never heard those unexpected and all-too-brief melodies of the maru-haruru without a quickening of the pulse, and a tingling of emotion sweeping across my senses—emotion of a kind impossible to define; but at the moment of its being I found myself trying to recall some place I had never seen, or some experience which had never taken place.

The maru-haruru were the life of the himene. At times, when the singing flagged for a moment, these men, chanting in deep resonant tones, aroused the others. The old men and women were quickened as though their worn bodies had absorbed of a sudden some strange, youth-bringing virus.

Their eyes glistened, they too swayed their bodies a little, and the chorus proceeded with new vigor.

The women singers, the fa'aro'o-himene, sat at one side and in front of the maru-haruru, and opposite them was the maru-tamau-himene the chorus. Each of these sections had its leaders, but a stranger watching them would never have suspected it, for there was no movement of head, hands, or body to indicate leadership. Toto was conductor for the entire chorus, but neither did he have any beating of time to do. All these people had so nice a sense of rhythm, acquired doubtlessly through lives of practice, that they sang together in perfect cadence. Toto's only duty as conductor was to sing in advance, to melodies of his own, the words of the next verse. And of this, too, a stranger would have been unaware, for Toto's passages mingled with those of the others in perfect consonance, like the measured counterpoint of French horns in a great orchestra, disparate yet harmonious.

Oura-woman's part was unique. She was called the pere-pere-himene, and sang, I fancy, purely from inspiration. Her little melodies, as varied as they were beautiful, broke forth when the seventh wave of song had risen to its height; and they were strewn out like the lace of the sea down the broad slopes of each dying cadence.

I never tired of listening when she sang her strange refrains; they seemed replete with the loneliness of remote islands in a far sea, full of the unconscious urges of savage life.

She sang, as did the other women, with her eyes lowered. Their parted lips scarcely moved; and it was hard to believe that this wild and primitive music, stirring the senses and the spirit, came from the throats of those singing with so little apparent effort—those who appeared to be listening rather than singing at all.

Of a sudden the song was at an end, and the singers, in attitudes of profound repose, gazed downward in silence. From somewhere a rooster crowed, and the challenge was taken up far and near by all the roosters in the village as well as their wild brothers in the hills. This chorus, too, subsided as suddenly as it had begun; then my ears caught the sound of gossip on the doorstep. I recognized Taunoa's voice:

"There is a man living a few fathoms down the road who was married a few weeks ago ... but where is his wife?"

"Yes; where? And where is the husband of the woman who lives in the breadfruit grove one hundred yards from Tuahu's house?"

Then Faatomo's voice: "Did you hear about Faiipo's quarrel with his wife? It was because she ..." and so the gossip went on, endlessly, hour after hour; and, hearing it, even the dignified people within doors exchanged amused smiles.

Presently Atua rose to his full height, and with his shoulders thrown back waited for the murmur at the doorstep to subside; then he addressed the villagers:

"Members of the himene, men and women singers, and all of you in this house of gathering, may you live! This is what I have to tell you, the words of Monsieur Pierre, the missionary who has written letters to both our preacher, Abraham, and me:

"The Monsieur Pierre will come to Vaiiti on next Saturday at the hour of sunset, for the yearly collection. See to it, you people of Vaiiti, that there is abundance of food for him. Go to the reef for shellfish and lobsters, to the mountains for plantains and yams, to the sea for albacore and to the lagoon for mullet. And do not hesitate to kill your fowls and your pigs, for this feast is in the name of Jehovah. And you who have coconut trees, cut your nuts tomorrow, dig out the meat, dry it in the sun and sell it to the village Chinaman, for there must be much money to give to Monsieur Pierre on Saturday night, so we will not be shamed in the presence of men from the other villages.

"This is all I have to say to you. Let my words be carved in your ears."

Atua then sat down. I thought I had noticed his eyebrows knit, and had heard a biting note in his voice. I recalled that he was a direct descendant of forty-eight chiefs and kings who had ruled well in the old days without assistance from the clergy, and I felt certain that he, in a half-conscious way, regretted those ancient times.

Then Tuahu rose to announce that tomorrow morning at dawn all the men of Vaiiti should gather at his house for coffee, and then go up the valley for mountain plantains. He mentioned that his son Ropati would accompany them.

There was more singing after Tuahu had made his announcement. Some of the songs were paraphrases of Biblical stories sung to the music of missionary hymns; but one scarcely recognized the melodies, so greatly had they been altered. But for the most part it was the *pari-pari-fenua*—songs of the land—that were sung: tales of gods, supermen, and beautiful women; legends as old as the island itself, whose origins were lost in the night of

past time. One heard, in the fragments of myths, praises of the fertility of the soil, of the strength of the men and the charm of the women, of the abundance of food, the freshness of the streams, the many fish. And there were praises of the weather. On the leeward side of the island the songs told of cloudless days and starlit nights; but on the windward side it was of the wind and rain and the luxuriant vegetation.

At midnight old Tefa, who had taken no part in the singing, entered, glanced casually this way and that, and without speaking moved out again. This was a sign that everyone understood: it was time for refreshments. Tefa had them ready: a gasoline tin full of steaming black coffee, and a loaf of bread for each of the singers. I did not join them. With a nod to Tuahu, I turned down the trail to the beach and treaded the glistening sand to my house.

It was very silent and lonely in the little bamboo-and-thatch home, for Terii, inconstant child, came only at times to the house by Vaiiti Lagoon, so I lit the lamp, and, drawing a steamer chair to the table, sat down to read. It seemed that only a moment later I awoke to find the lagoon, like a nether sky, bright with the reflection of the clouds, and Tuahu standing on the verandah steps, bidding me good-morning, and reminding me that we must go into the mountains today.

The Great Cliff of Autara

Much of the fei sold in the Papeete market was cut from the densely wooded ridges of Vaiiti. The gathering of the plantains was a communal affair, for it would have been impossible for one man to cut and carry enough to make it worth while taking to Papeete. It was a custom in the village for each of the older men to take turns in marketing the fruit, and for all the men to assist him in gathering it.

This morning it was Tuahu's turn, and he had come down to my place on the lagoon beach to ask me to join the expedition. He was dressed in a pareu, with one of its loose corners brought between his legs and tucked in behind, native fashion. The upper part of his body was bare, and I observed, as often before, his strong muscular chest and arms, and the callous lump, as large as a turkey's egg, on either shoulder. These were common to the men of the island and were the result of the thousands of loads of fei, bananas, wild pig, and the like which they carried slung across their shoulders on poles from the mountains and valleys.

It had been a settled thing between Tuahu and me for a long time that when he was to be the leader of a fei party I was to go with him and prove to the other men of the village that I was a true child of Tahiti, for only the men of strength and endurance take part in these expeditions.

I was none too eager, but Tuahu was insistent. "You must come," he had said, "otherwise the villagers will ridicule me. They will say: 'Where is your son, Tuahu? Has he not strength enough for this work?' I should be shamed if they questioned me thus."

I mentioned that he would certainly be shamed if the people saw the size of the load I brought down from the mountains; but Tuahu seemed confident that all would turn out well, so I dressed myself native fashion, took my bush knife, and together we followed the river trail to his house.

Terii laughed when she saw me. "Ah," she cried, "so you are going for fei? Are you not hamaa? All the men will laugh at you when you come down the trail with only a child's load on your shoulder. And Tuahu will be ashamed of you too; but I will laugh—I will sit here with my girl friends and we will watch you sweating and groaning under a load that a child of

twelve could carry. Oh, it will be great fun! Are not you white men hamaa that you have so little strength?”

I was hamaa in advance, and yet I was fairly strong according to civilized men’s idea of strength. But under Terii’s taunts I promised myself to carry down a load of fei equal to the best of them.

Twenty-six men sat down to coffee, all save myself dressed in their Sunday coats of white drill and blue denim trousers. Tuahu himself had changed to this costume. I was the only one clad in a pareu, and I felt a little out of place; but Tuahu reassured me. “For you are a white man and we all know that you have many fine clothes; but it is not pretty—aita nehehe—for the others to drink coffee in my house in pareus.”

Each of us had a quart bowl of coffee and a loaf of bread, enough for a family of four at home. On the table were great basins of sugar and jugs of coconut milk, the latter more delicious in coffee than fresh cream. We ate in silence, Reretu and Terii serving us. When we had finished, each man washed his own bowl and spoon in the river; and just at sunrise we started up the valley. Two hundred yards beyond the road we made a halt, and there the men changed from Sunday clothes to those more suitable for breaking through the jungle. Some wrapped on pareus and trussed them up like swimming trunks; others wore the remnants of trousers, cut off well above the knees. All were naked above the waist.

We proceeded inland along the river, through groves of wild chestnuts, often wading in the streams, at times along a slippery footpath on the bank, mounting higher and higher until, looking back along the way we had come, I caught glimpses, through the dense jungle, of the lowlands and the sea beyond.

For more than an hour we passed through country where mountain plantains grew in abundance, but we made no halt to gather the fruit. Tuahu explained that the tract lowest in the valley was reserved for the children, and the next one above it, on the low slopes of the mountains, for the old men and the women. It would be a shabby trick for anyone, in the full strength of manhood, to cut fei from these tracts.

At last we came to a waterfall where those who had gone ahead awaited the stragglers. We had heard the roar of the falls for some time, but we were within a few hundred feet of them before, on rounding a shoulder of the main ridge, the jungle opened at a ford, and there it was before us, a long ribbon of water falling straight from a shelf on the verdured cliffs. A low

knoll, shaded by a few island chestnuts, hid the lower part of the falls, and stretched out on this knoll or sitting with their backs to the trees, smoking and gossiping, were the rest of the fei hunters. Their attitudes of repose were as natural as those of wild animals. Half naked, clean brown skinned, strong and lithe as Greek athletes, with the idyllic background they formed a picture not easily forgotten. There was Pauoto, big overgrown schoolboy, brother of Mama-Reretu and father of Terii—irresponsible, improvident, highly amused with everything and everybody, incapable of anger, or, perhaps, any emotion save hunger, love, and laughter; Faiipo, the strong man and the handsome, who was well aware of his strength and his fine features, and justly proud of them too; Faatomo, Tuahu's son, the village dandy. His curly hair was always oiled and combed, his trousers creased, his Tahitian hat stiff with starch and gayly wreathed with strings of shells and flowers. With them were Tevearai the loud-mouthed, Nui-man the insignificant, Tua of the Mongolian eyes, Taunoa the ladies' man. Pauoto was speaking when we waded through the ford and approached them.

Pauoto: "Only one iron ship have I seen sink. It was the man-o'-war that struck the reef off Opunohu Bay ... and yet I do not understand how an iron ship can float."

Faiipo: "I will explain it to you, foolish one. Iron ships float because of the things in them which cannot sink: kapok mattresses, and tables and chairs, and camphorwood chests."

Tevearai: "One can see that you know little of iron ships, Faiipo. It is the air in the ship that holds it up."

Tuahu: "You are right, Tevearai; my son has told me that."

Faiipo: "But how can that be? The air would easily escape through the hatches and the port-holes, and then the ship would go down like a stone. The long and short of it is that the ship floats because the white man made it. Everybody knows that if a child of Tahiti were to make an iron ship it would sink to the bottom of the sea."

Tuahu: "That is true, for the white man has knowledge that we children of Tahiti can never have."

"How is that, Tuahu?" I asked.

He replied: "Have you not heard the story about how God made the land and the sea and the sky? Well, it was in this fashion: All the people of the islands, and the white men as well, were standing before God, and He said to them:

“‘The things that I shall now do you must know nothing of. Therefore close your eyes and put your hands over your eyes, and do not remove your hands until I have finished my work.’

“So the children of the islands and the white men all closed their eyes and covered them with their hands as they had been told; and God went to work making the land and the sea and the sky and all the things found there. The children of these islands obeyed God; they did not look once until all had been created. But the white men were curious; they opened their eyes and peeked between their fingers, like this”—and Tuahu showed me how it had been done. “The white men saw how God made iron and copper and silver and gold, and where He placed them; and how the trees and plants were made, and everything there is. We children of the islands saw none of these things, and so we know little, and the white men rule us and laugh at us because our ancestors refused to peek.”

Myself: “But, Tuahu, how could this be? How could men be looking on when God had not yet finished making the land?”

Tuahu paid no attention to Faiipo. There was a twinkle in his eyes when he said to me: “Ah, Ropati, men who ask foolish questions should cut and carry fei rather than talk to wise men. Why do you ask me where the men stood? You should know this, not I, for your ancestors were among those who peeked!”

It was cool and restful in the upper reaches of the valley, a delightful place to smoke and yarn after a long climb. I hoped we might remain there indefinitely; but after a ten-minute halt Tuahu rose and, motioning for me to follow him, went straight for the steepest part of the valley wall. The rest of the men broke into the jungle, soon to disappear.

Tuahu climbed steadily for a quarter of an hour; then, coming to a clump of bamboo, he cut two poles about five feet long. On these we would carry our fei, half of the load bound to either end. He also stripped the bark from a few hibiscus shoots, with which to fasten the bunches to the poles. Then we went on again, zigzagging back and forth up the steep slope to come out at last on a knife-edged ridge that overlooked a vast stretch of valley and the lowlands and distant sea beyond. I was steaming with perspiration and puffing hard. Tuahu smiled, a little apologetically, I thought.

“You must not be angry because I have brought you to this difficult place for fei,” he said. “Since this is the first time you have come, we must

show the others—and Terii, that rogue of a niece of mine, who, by the way, would make you a fine wife—that there is no need for you to come again unless you choose. Furthermore, this is the Great Cliff of Autara, and the fei growing here belongs to your land of Hitireia.”

He went on to tell me that in these days, with the population of the island greatly decreased, there was more than enough fei for everyone; but years ago food sometimes had been scarce. Thus, to avoid contention, the mountain land had been divided and portioned out to the residents of the lowland tracts. It was the custom then, and one still followed, for each family to cut fei from the mountain land assigned to their valley property.

“The fei, as you know, is of great value to us,” Tuahu went on as we climbed from the ridge on to a vertiginous wall of the valley. “It belongs to all of us, to the land itself and not to any one man or family. When Mauu sold you the land of Hitireia it included the right to gather your fei from all this tract before us. The French government does not recognize this, but no native would question it. But come! We have far to return and it is time to set to work.”

Groves of plantains covered the Great Cliff of Autara. I cut two large bunches and Tuahu five. My small load must have been nearly a hundred-weight. Having tied a bunch to either end of my pole, I started sliding down the cliff. Tuahu soon saw that the task was too much for me if it was not positively dangerous, so he told me—a little regretfully, I fancy—to leave my fei on a narrow shelf where I had stopped to rest, and that he would come back later to get them.

The old man descended the mountainside with the agility of a panther, swinging his enormous burden from shoulder to shoulder to avoid contact with the trees and bush. For all its weight he rarely slipped; he threw his whole weight on stones which held like pilings, while I, with only myself to carry, slipped clumsily down, preceded by a small avalanche of rocks and earth. I was glad that Terii could not see me. A little above the fei trail I sat down to wait for Tuahu, who had returned for my load. He came back with five bunches instead of the two I had cut!

“Good God!” I thought. “Does he expect me to carry all that?” I said nothing, but I knew it would be impossible for me to carry half the load, even along the trail.

It was about two o’clock then, and I was for getting on at once, for I was hungry and the mosquitoes were annoying in that part of the valley.

Tuahu, however, was in no hurry. Since he was the leader of the expedition, he said, it was necessary that he should let the others pass first. Soon they began to come, swinging along the trail below us at a gait between a walk and a trot. The younger men carried four or five bunches each; the older ones from six to eight, the weight being nicely adjusted on their poles. Faiipo came last. He sauntered along lazily, humming a little tune, and with such a load that I forgot for the moment the mosquitoes. He carried a burden of well over three hundred pounds!

Tuahu hailed him as he passed below our resting place. "Ua reva ia Taunoa?" (Has Taunoa passed?)

Faiipo glanced up quickly. "What are you doing, you two?" he cried. "Looking over the valley of Teahatea; or are you still talking about iron ship? ... Yes; Taunoa has passed."

He seemed in no hurry to proceed. Without putting down his load he took out a box of matches and a little tin of tobacco from under his hat, toasted a leaf of tobacco over the flame of a match, rolled it spirally in a strip of pandanus leaf, and lit it. This, I knew well, was a gesture of superiority for my benefit, as much as to say: "You see what loads we islanders carry? But we make nothing of it!" I was tempted to make some acknowledgment of his tremendous strength, but refrained. A moment later he readjusted his load with a quick deft heave and disappeared among the trees.

"We will go now," Tuahu said. "It was my wish that there should be no one behind us, for you will rest many times on the way down, and I should be ashamed if any of the young men should see that you are not as strong as they. You are not, of course, and that is to be expected, for we islanders are accustomed to this work since boyhood. Nevertheless, my son, you shall gain fame this day; and for all that you are white, no one will ever dare say that you are not a child of Tahiti."

I wondered, a little uneasily, just what Tuahu meant by that as I watched him re-sorting our loads. It was a relief to see that eight of our ten bunches of fei were attached to his own pole. He swung them to his shoulder with somewhat of an effort for all his great strength, and as he started down the trail at a trotting walk I followed with the other two. The going was not so difficult at first. I found that by continually shifting the load from one shoulder to the other and resting often I could get along fairly well; but within half an hour the pole began to burn my shoulder, and adjust the

burden as I would there was no relief. Little by little the journey became worse than a nightmare, for it was reality. The sweat poured into my eyes, almost blinding them. Sharp pains stabbed through my chest; and my shoulders, unprotected by the callous paddings, seemed all bone. I stubbed my toe continually, slipped over wet stones; branches from overhanging trees whipped my face. At last, after what seemed hours of agonizing effort, we reached the place where the men had changed from their Sunday clothes. There we rested for a long time; and there Tuahu untied the bunches of fei and rearranged our loads, five bunches to a pole!

“All the people of Vaiiti know,” he said, “that you are a child of mine; and I have told them that you are a true son of the islands. Some of them laughed when I said this, and only this morning Tevearai said, in his boastful way: ‘I will eat at one meal all the fei the white man carries down from the mountains.’ He shall eat his words, my son, but he will not eat these five bunches of fei which I now tie on your pole. The men of Vaiiti need not know that you brought a child’s load down the valley; it is enough that they see you with this burden large enough for nay but the strongest men. Can you carry this, my son? We have but three hundred paces to go.”

I was touched by the old man’s regard for me and his concern for my name in the village. Therefore I resolved to do the impossible for his sake if not for my own. After we had had a refreshing swim in the stream, Tuahu lifted my load and placed it on my shoulder, a weight of two hundred pounds. At first I thought I should be crushed to the ground, my shoulder bones snapped in two; but I staggered ahead, out of the dense brush on to the road. There, in full view of the village, I dared not fail.

A group of girls were washing clothes by the bridge. “Ropati tane!” they cried in amazement, (Ropati the man!) I smiled, but I fear it was rather a wan smile from pinched lips. Tuahu, walking behind me, chaffed with them, and told them there was not a youth in the village who could carry a load of fei with such ease as I had carried mine.

“You should have seen him coming down the Great Cliff of Autara!” he cried proudly; and in spite of my agony I was amused at this, remembering how I had slid down, and I gained new strength for the last effort. Somehow I even managed to saunter the last few yards into the midst of the natives gathered round Tuahu’s cookhouse. Mama-Reretu was kneeling by the native oven while Terii grated coconuts under the mango tree. “Ropati

tane!" they too exclaimed. This is an expression of surprise, of pleasure, of admiration, all in one.

"Ai-ja!" cried Tuahu as we threw off our loads. "It is a long journey down from the Great Cliff of Autara!"

"Yes, quite a little ways," I mumbled as casually as I could. My eyes had been on Terii, and I thought I had noticed a skeptical flicker in her glance; but she smiled charmingly for all that.

"What did you say, Tuahu?" Mama-Reretu broke in sharply. "You did not go there for your fei?"

"And where else should we go?" Tuahu cried. "Is not the Great Cliff of Autara attached to Ropati's land of Hitireia? It is the farthest and the steepest of the fei tracts, and therefore I suggested that Ropati cut his fei from one of my tracts farther down the valley; but this child of mine would not listen. 'I shall cut my fei from the Great Cliff of Autara or I shall cut none at all!' he cried in a great voice. And so he had his way: he climbed to the cliff, and you can see what large bunches he chose. You have done well to call him a man!"

So my laurels were won—after a fashion; and many a time since that never-to-be-repeated day, when Tuahu and I talked to some fine old native of another district, the following conversation has taken place:

Visitor: "This white man here, a valuable thing?"

Tuahu: "Valuable; you have spoken the word."

Visitor: "Has he important work?"

Tuahu: "Work is no name for it. He has the largest taro patch on the island!"

Visitor: "Has he a wife?"

Tuahu hesitated an instant before replying: "Soon, I hope. He is wise, this son of mine. He will make a choice in his own good time."

Inwardly I blushed as I listened to the lovable old liar's praise. But there was still some doubt in the stranger's mind: white men, as a rule, are such a worthless lot. So he asked the final question, quietly, diffidently, reluctant to embarrass his host:—

"Does the man here go for fei?"

Then Tuahu, who had been waiting for this, straightened up, threw back his head, and answered in a booming voice: "Does he go for fei? Ha, my friend, you have heard of the Great Cliff of Autara, the farthest and the hardest to reach of all the fei tracts in our valley? Well, it is there that my

son goes to cut his fei, for the great cliff belongs to his land of Hitireia. He is like one of the ancient race, this son of mine—a true child of Tahiti! He carries five, six, seven, eight, even nine large bunches at a time, overtaking and passing the young men who rest on the way, and not stopping once till he reaches the sea!”

An astonished “Ropati tane!” came from the visitor, and so my fame grew. And so often did Tuahu tell this story of my achievement that he came to believe it himself. As for myself, I was content with my laurels and never again climbed the Great Cliff of Autara.

The Christian Festival

Every year the Reverent Pierre made the round of his parishes in Tahiti and the neighboring island of Moorea. It must have been a tiresome task, for it required several months, as there were dozens of villages on each island and each village must be visited. It was very profitable.

For many days the natives of Vaiiti prepared for his reception. Not only did they save their money, but also such delicacies as a particularly fat pig, a fish trap full of sea crabs, a patch of taro that had matured without being molested by leaf hoppers, bunches of sweet red-husked coconuts that were of just the right age for drinking.

On this particular Saturday morning there was an unusual stir in the village: a squealing pig was being dragged by the neck and pulled by the tail to the rectory, where a great native oven had been made to receive him; Faatomo, Faiipo, and Tevearai came in from a whole night's fishing on the reef, each with a bagful of lobsters and eels and such things; Tuahu and a few of the older natives brought special large fei from Vaihiria Valley; others came with breadfruit and yams from the mountains. And because the Reverend Pierre was very fond of shrimps, Nui-woman, Tetuanui, and Terii dragged small hand nets along the banks of Vaiiti River until they had a thousand or more of the luscious creatures. Mama-Reretu's pineapple patch, too, was thinned out, while Tomi and his friends ravished my alligator-pear tree despite my remonstrance.

As the day advanced there was a great bustle in the chipped-coral rectory of Preacher Abraham. Dim light slanted through the small hole-like windows onto the parson's weazened and childish face as he hobbled about the one room, preparing himself for the festival. He was extremely myopic and he misplaced things continually. His memory was poor. He would look up a dozen texts for the next day's sermon and place paper slips in his Bible to mark them. When preaching he would remember vaguely the suitable texts, but when he hunted for them, his Bible would be so full of paper slips that he could seldom find the right ones.

"Ah, yes," he would mutter, shortly before leaving the church. "I remember now: I slipped that piece of envelope there several months ago to

remind me of a suitable chapter to read to Pauoto, who had been drinking orange beer again. Well, well; and that reminds me that I could not find it when I needed it, in spite of the marker.” And as he fingered the leaves of his Bible: “Let me see, this must be it! My, what faint print this is! I must get my spectacles. Now where did I leave them? Oh yes; on top of the cupboard, the left-hand corner. Goodness, what is this? A piece of breadfruit! How amusing! I remember now that I put it there last Sunday so it wouldn’t be eaten by the children and I could have it after service. I must have entirely forgotten it! But what was I looking for? No matter. But let me think; there was something to attend to ... Oh yes; the Reverend Pierre is coming tonight!”

The Reverend arrived at dusk with his sharp-featured wife, and a grand feast was laid before them and the deacons of the church, Tuahu among them.

After dining, the Reverend Pierre, followed by his wife, and carrying his Bible and a large leathern bag, entered the church. Then all my neighbors crowded in, dressed in their finery, the most stiffly starched of their coats and dresses. And one would have believed that the people had been starched themselves, so stiffly did they sit on the straight-backed benches.

I followed them to sit on the back bench, among the poor, the unstarched, and the ungodly. I noticed that a few of those close to me were far from at ease, and I sensed that it was because they had little to give to the Reverend Pierre.

There were three chairs behind the pulpit. The Reverend Pierre occupied the centre one, a small man, physically weak but with a sharp impressive glance and a good pulpit voice. To his right sat a well-fed preacher from Papeete; to his left our local parson, Abraham. Behind them, a little to one side, her sharp eyes darting this way and that, Madame Pierre occupied the front edge of her chair, her back as stiff as a yardstick.

“Tatani ei! Mei ea mai oe?” the Vaiiti neighbors sang.

“Oh, Satan, oh! Where are you from?”

“From walking here and there Little sinners,— Just a-walking here and there!”

There was a prayer from the Papeete preacher, a song about Noah and the Ark, a prayer from Abraham, and then the Reverend Pierre rose, and in perfect Tahitian told the Vaiitians of the suffering of good Christians in

France, of cold winters, the need of bread for starving children; and of the churches of Christ that were destroyed by the Germans, and how the money that the Vaiiti people gave tonight would be used to build new churches... . Much the same kind of thing, I imagine, as other Reverend Pierres were telling the congregations in France, only the latter preachers were requesting funds for the poor Tahitians.

Finally, without any apparent embarrassment, the Reverend mentioned that the people of Mataeia, the district adjoining Vaiiti, had given four thousand francs only last night; four thousand francs for the suffering Christians of civilization. He hoped the Vaiitians would not be shamed by giving less.

Vaiiti would not be shamed, I knew. Many of my neighbors had gone without bread for weeks so that Vaiiti might give more than Mataeia. Pierre, I was told, always found that the first districts visited during the year gave the least; then, one by one, each village tried to outdo the others until, in the end, people actually borrowed money on their land, and many thousands of francs were donated by villages where one should expect but a few hundred.

My flesh crept when the Reverend Pierre concluded: "Now, my brothers, we will make our collection for the Lord!" I thought it blasphemy. Why could not he have said: "We will make our collection for the missionary society"?

Reverend Pierre laid his leathern bag on the pulpit and pushed the Bible to one side. For a space no one rose. There was that embarrassed silence one meets in such a situation; there were nervous coughs, questioning glances, and fidgeting in the seats. Then little Oura-woman, who sang the weird melodies in the himene house, rose from her bench and moved almost at a run down the aisle. Timidly, with lowered eyes, she laid five francs on the pulpit before the Reverend Pierre. He ignored her, for she had given only the widow's mite. As she returned to her seat I could see that she was almost in tears.

Next, handsome young Taunoa strode to the pulpit. There was no sign of nervousness in this village dandy. He placed ten francs on the pulpit, saying loudly, so there would be no question about everyone hearing: "Here is my ten francs, Monsieur Pierre. I give it to the Lord because I am a good Christian—not a heathen like other of the young men!" Then he turned and

strode proudly back to his seat. The Reverend Pierre, not wishing to encourage such small donations, nodded but coldly.

When Pauoto, big overgrown child of forty, stumbled to the pulpit, quaking and grinning with self-consciousness, and donated twenty francs, the Reverend Pierre bowed, and for the first time Abraham and the Papeete preacher seemed to come to life. They also bowed.

After a few more small contributions had been made, Deacon Tevearai rose and walked down the aisle, telling the villagers in his loud-mouthed way that he was giving fifty francs to the church. He was about to give his all to the Lord, he said, and he would return home a pauper. When his money was laid before the Reverend Pierre, that man rose and shook hands with the deacon; the two native preachers smiled and nodded.

That was not the high spot. Soon Tuahu approached the pulpit in his quiet way, his money gripped tightly in his hand. He said nothing, but when he laid a hundred francs on the pulpit I noticed the Reverend Pierre start, his face break into smiles; then, jumping to his feet, he shook Tuahu's hand, while Abraham and the Papeete preacher also rose and shook my foster father's hand. Of course Tuahu was pleased; his face was beaming as he returned to his seat; but halfway down the aisle he caught my eye, smiled weakly, and lowering his head became very hamaa. He knew I was recalling that the hundred francs was the entire profit from his fei expedition, and that he had promised me he would use it to pay his account with the village Chinaman.

One by one my neighbors approached the pulpit, and one by one they received recognition in exact ration to the amount they gave. There was the five-franc disregard, the ten-franc disapproval, the twenty-franc smile and nod, the fifty-franc smile, nod, and handshake, the hundred-franc triple smile, nod, and handshake; and each donor knew, through long-standing precedent, which he was to receive at the moment when he had gathered together his last available sous and put them in safe-keeping for the big night.

The real event of the meeting came when Solomon, the half-caste Hebrew-Polynesian, tramped arrogantly to the pulpit, holding above his head two hundred-franc notes. Then a singular thing happened. He lowered his hand, took one of the notes and laid it on the pulpit, and for a full minute held the other one before him, fingering it anxiously and shifting his glance from it to the Reverend Pierre. This last man smiled encouragement, while

the Papeete preacher lifted his eyebrows in an interrogative way and old Abraham, no doubt, wondered what it was all about. Then, with an impulsive gesture, Solomon flung the note onto the pulpit, whereupon Pierre rose, wreathed in smiles; Abraham and the Papeete preacher rose, wreathed in smiles; and for the first time that evening Madame Pierre rose, wreathed in smiles. All bowed and shook heartily the hand of the Jewish-Polynesian Solomon.

The money was jammed hurriedly into the leathern bag; there was a short prayer; the meeting was at an end.

I felt a little depressed as I left the church and walked arm in arm with Terii down the village road. It seemed to me that two avaricious French peasants had appeared on the village scene that evening successfully to negotiate a confidence game. But then, I thought with a shrug, the neighbors had enjoyed it, and that was the important thing.

“Tuahu will be angry with you for not making at least a five-franc donation,” Terii said presently.

“Yes; and I am angry with him. He should have kept the hundred francs to pay his bill at the Chinaman’s store.”

“Oh, Ropati,” Terii said with a playful laugh, “Tuahu knows you will pay the Chinaman!”

“Of course I’ll pay the Chinaman; but it makes me peeved to know that indirectly I have made a contribution to the Reverend Pierre.”

“Aue-ue!” Terii exclaimed with mock zeal. “Don’t you know that Jehovah comes before the Chinaman?”

“Perhaps so, pretty Terii,” said I; “but I fancy that Jehovah will not see many of the Vaiiti francs—nor the starving children of France, as far as that goes.”

Terii gave a little sigh. She hadn’t thought of that, she said. But the next moment she had forgotten all about it, for we had turned from the road to follow a little-used trail to the lagoon beach and the wattle-and-thatch home; and it was dark on the trail, so we walked very closely. Terii had forgotten the problems of Christianity in her fear of the ancient demons of Tahiti; and I had forgotten my depression in the feel of her little hand, gripped tightly in mine.

Solomon's Lightning Wagon

Solomon was a half-caste Hebrew-Tahitian who lived in what he called a "European house," halfway between the Vaiiti River and the Chinaman's shop. A tall raw-boned man of forty, blind in one eye and half blind in the other, he wore glasses of an incredible thickness; and when he walked he turned his head slightly to one side so as to get a better view, from the one passable eye, round his beaked nose. He had the native's love of pleasure—though he seldom smiled—and the Jew's thrift. He played the accordion divinely and sang—not so divinely; but when he played he touched the keys lightly so as not to wear out the instrument, and when a particularly frugal mood would sweep over him he would pump the accordion so gently that one could scarcely hear a sound. Solomon would slave in his vanilla plantation a full year; but when his beans were harvested, the love of ostentation and pleasure would take control of him, and more than likely he would spend the profits of the whole year's work in a single Papeete carouse ... or, because he thought it a bargain, he would buy some such thing as a lightning wagon.

Solomon did not know whether to be a Jew or a Tahitian,—as was evinced in the conflict between ostentation and avarice in the church festival,—so he took turns about. When the Tahitian chromosomes were dominant he was fairly happy, in his own gloomy way; but when the Jewish ones got the upper hand he would be full of schemes to make money and miserable because he could not carry them through.

"All we need in Vaiiti is a vanilla syndicate," he said to Tuahu and me one day. "Get a paper and pencil, Ropati, and we'll figure it out."

For an hour thereafter he was full of the scheme. There would be extensive curing houses, agents in America, indentured coolie labor, and a special steamship line. Or better, we could extract the essence here in Vaiiti and ship it by parcel post direct to the consumers, thus cutting prices, increasing turnover and profits. In Vaiiti alone, he reckoned, we could work the syndicated plantations up to six hundred thousand vines. He was about to stretch the syndicate's tentacles out until they encompassed the whole of the Society Islands when Tuahu left to reappear with a bottle of wine. I took

the hint, and bringing out my accordion placed it in Solomon's lap; and he, after a furtive glance or two at us, reached for the glass of wine Tuahu had poured, drank, and started pumping my accordion as he would never have pumped his own.

Solomon's house was a deal-board and iron-roof affair that had been painted in the days of his father. At that time, I was told, it also had steps leading to the verandah, which, incidentally, had an unbroken board floor. Also, there were hinges on the many doors, glass in the windows, and hardwood supports at regular intervals under the floor joists.

Solomon's buggy was in little better repair than his house, but by the use of many wires it held together a part of the time. When it failed to hold together, Solomon would stop by the roadside, break off a few hibiscus shoots, strip off their tough bark, and by devious lashings and old-granny knots put the buggy into a temporarily serviceable state.

But his horse! When Tuahu and I had business on the other side of the island we always hired Boulgasse, the horse, as well as the buggy, for he was a horse surpassed only by Pegasus for speed, endurance, and imagination. He was as tall and bony and myopic as Solomon. He would start off at a fast long-legged trot, his head thrust forward as though he were smelling the oats at the journey's end; and he never slackened his pace for bridge, hill, bread wagon, or even the sack wagon itself! Sometimes I doubted his physiological ability to stop unless he was pulled in. Though the sweat poured down his withers and his breath came in noisy snorts, he would keep going till he fell down in his tracks—a thing that happened whenever he tripped over a frond or stone. Then he would rest while we repaired the broken shafts with lengths of wire we had brought for the purpose.

Boulgasse could dodge the Chinaman's bread cart alone as well as when we guided him, which we seldom did, for he would pay us no attention anyway. If we showed too much wrong-headedness by jerking the reins frantically to turn him off the road or stop him, he would simply grip the bit in his teeth, and with a warning hick toward the dashboard continue to hoof off the predetermined kilometres.

Among his many faults he had a morbid aversion to men carrying fish. At the first sight of a fisherman with his catch slung on a pole across his shoulder, Boulgasse would throw out all four legs and stop instantly, invariably breaking the breeching and getting himself bumped by the

singletree, and sometimes throwing one or both of us out of the buggy. After such an interlude Tuahu would go in search of hibiscus bark to repair the breeching while I approached the fisherman to explain that my horse was a confirmed ichthyophobiatic, and would he please hide in the bush while we passed.

I had been a year in Vaiiti when Solomon bought his lightning wagon—pereoo uira. It was a Maxwell, 1910, and it cost him five hundred francs—twenty dollars. Though a remarkable lightning wagon in many ways, it never supplanted Boulgasse. In fact, Boulgasse became even more indispensable, not only in carrying Solomon from village to village, but also in hauling the lightning wagon home. Boulgasse, I fancy, rather liked the car. He held his gaunt head very erect when he was hitched in front of it, and he would whinny with caustic mirth when he heard the engine backfiring and exploding itself into a long silence.

The lightning wagon looked old for its years. It was patched with bits of tin, lashed together with wire, rope, and even twine, dented, scratched, perforated to a mere relic of its former self. The hood was torn, one of the lamp lenses was broken. Rusty springs had pierced through the mouldering upholstery; there was a long strip of medicated adhesive plaster stuck diagonally over a crack in the windshield, and a toy tin horn, that made a funny little “peep, peep!” noise, took the place of the broken one. But with all its failings, the lightning wagon was the apple of Solomon’s eye.

When driving it Solomon kept his head turned slightly to one side, as when he was walking. Away down at my house on the beach I could hear him passing; and I could hear when the car stopped with a terrific explosion of backfiring. Then I knew that Tomi and the rest of the urchins would have a great time, laughing at Solomon as he leaned over, with his one good eye within six inches of the engine, and muttered esoteric things about carburetors and piston rings. But they were good children; and when Solomon had tired of cranking they would push his car home, and even help him to hitch Boulgasse between the shafts of the unbeautiful but adequate buggy.

The Village Chinaman

Ah La, son of the venerable Ah Jong, was an abject-appearing little Canton coolie, as crooked-legged as the rest of his countrymen at Tahiti, as mercenary and as full of low cunning. Any afternoon, when business was slack, he could be seen sprawled on the counter of Ah Jong's shop, and heard snoring in gutturals, palatals, and nasal vowels, his face red and puffed, his fly-trap mouth open.

Each evening he mixed his bread dough; then sat with the Chinamen from the rice paddies of Farue Valley, the truck gardens and tobacco plantations, to play dominoes and cards, noisily. And sometimes, on passing his store at night, one would smell a puff of opium, and, if the night was still, hear the wheezing of a bamboo pipe.

Perhaps Ah La rested an hour or two after midnight; but at the first cockcrow he rose, lighted his rusty old lantern, and went to work in the bakeshop, kneading, cutting, and baking till dawn. Then he would hitch one of his bony horses to the bread wagon, and as the first sunlight slanted across the coconut trees he would start on his daily round, blowing his conch shell at every turn in the road, stopping at each group of natives to sell his provisions—always on credit.

Like all the Chinamen of Tahiti, Ah La had found an earthly paradise in the tropics: a land of no famines or floods, of no scorching summers or freezing winters; a land where food was cheap, there was money in everything he turned his hand to; a land which had a tolerant government, no revolutions, plenty of inexpensive opium, and a childish people who didn't mind being robbed!

Waiting for the bread wagon was a social event among my neighbors. They were all at the road long before Ah La passed, discussing the happenings of the day before, speculating on the weather, the fishing, and the trend of local affairs, exactly as would a group of Americans gathered at a country post office, awaiting the mail.

Under the two great mango trees by the Vaiiti River Nui-woman and her little husband, Nui-man, Tuahu, Reretu, Tomi, Tetuanui, Terii, and I watched the crags above Vaiiti for the first sign of sunrise. Sometimes we

talked, desultorily; but we were inclined to be a quieter group than most of those along the road, for the river's constant babble made us raise our voices slightly, and this was objectionable to the refined Tahitian ear; and perhaps the voice of the river herself engrossed our unconscious attention.

One hundred yards up the road stood Toto, the village crier, Faiipo, Tevearai, and Manua, the latter so old that he could scarcely hobble to the road. But he was there every morning, and he would not have missed the event had it taken his last breath to rise from his mat.

Farther along, the half-caste Chinese-Tahitian, Tua, delivered his opinions to Pauoto and others who lived in his particular section; and still farther along were Solomon, Chief Atua, Preacher Abraham, Policeman Mutoi, Schoolmaster Taaroa, all the Vaiitians, awaiting the call of Ah La's conch shell.

Before the bread wagon arrived we often heard Teraii, the net fisherman, shouting as he came up from the beach, a bamboo pole across his shoulder from which hung a dozen or more strings of fish.

"Eia! Eia! Eia!" he would cry (Fish! Fish! Fish!), though everyone could see that he had fish to sell. Then, for a few moments, the groups would break up, and those who had not been fishing for themselves would gather round Teraii.

In Vaiiti a string of fish always cost two francs fifty centimes. Nevertheless, each native, as Teraii approached, would shout: "How much money your fish, my friend?" and he would reply, his head thrown back and his tall body straight under the heavy load: "A half of five francs, foolish one... . A half of five francs, old man."

"Ah—ah—ah! Great money your fish!" would come from one of the prospective purchasers, and then big Nui-woman would throw out her hands and laugh: "Eiaha hoa'ia! E moni hue?" which may be translated as: "What, my friend! Money thrown away?" It was the inevitable joke of Vaiiti and never failed to bring roars of laughter. The phrase varied to: "Food thrown away?" "Work thrown away?" "Man thrown away?" If a person went to Tuahu's house to eat roast pig, and the old man cried good-naturedly: "What! My porker thrown away?" the guest would split his sides laughing, though a foreigner would find humour only in Tuahu's tone. To-day the phrase amuses me, and I cannot tell why it does unless it is because I have come to think in the native way.

While we were discussing the price of fish, Ah La, more than likely, appeared round the bend in the mape swamp; and in all probability he was letting his bony nag jog along unmolested, the reins wound round the whipstock, while he studied a homemade account book and jotted down queer wriggling characters. One of the pages might read:

Tuahu:

2 round bread.... 4 francs

1 long bread.... 1 franc

1 tobacco.... 1 franc

Total.... 6 francs (roughly 10 francs)

and so on, through Tuahu's account and those of the rest of the Vaiiti neighbors.

Sometimes, when I paid my own bill, it occurred to me that there was some discrepancy between my actual purchases and the way loaves of bread and packages of matches mounted up in the Chinaman's account. Often I resolved to check up on Ah La's bookkeeping. Thereupon I would buy a new memorandum book and a pencil with a clip to hold it on the book, and for several days I would conscientiously jot down every purchase I made; but always, after a little time, there would be some excuse for discontinuing it: John Chinaman was noted for his honesty—or I simply could not be bothered—or I would pay cash from then on—and so the memo book would be laid on the top of the rest of the little books that told of abandoned enterprise. Already the improvident ways of the islanders were getting into my blood.

Only Solomon could verify his account with the Chinaman. Every morning he came to the road with his big ledger, inherited from his father; and though he knew that bread was always two francs for the round kind and one for the long, Solomon never failed to ask Ah La the price of his loaves, to demand a discount, to paw over the bread till he found loaves that he thought a little larger than the others, to glare at Ah La through the thick lenses of his spectacles, and to jot down his purchases in the ledger. And when it came to paying his bill, as a matter of course Solomon always disputed the sum. It was believed that he gained a franc by this, but I

imagine that Ah La had already added the franc to Solomon's account, which he expected Solomon to dispute, and thus everybody was happy.

Ah La would study his accounts till he came to the Vaiiti bridge, within fifty feet of us. Then he would blow a great blast on his conch shell, and Nui-woman, starting in mock surprise, would cry: "Ah! Perhaps it is the Chinaman!"

Then Tetuanui, in a hesitant tone, her thick eyebrows raised and her head nodding, would affirm: "Yes; perhaps it is the Chinaman!"

But in a few seconds all doubt vanished as Ah La crossed the bridge and came to an imposing stop among us.

Bread, coffee, tea, sugar, tobacco, matches, tinned beef, were handed out rapidly. There were noisy shouts from the villagers: "Two round bread, Chinaman!" ... "I will pay you next week!" ... "Tobacco and bread. Quick, old crooked-legs!" ... "Bread! Pay you later!" ... "Don't flirt with me, ugly one. How much, your bread?"

And Ah La's singsong replies: "Ten bread... . Nevva mind... . You no money... . Nevva mind... . Two beef, two tobacco, two sugar, two matches. Nevva mind, you pay by-'nd-by all right... . You no like come store work for me, Miss Terii? ... No like! Nevva mind, yes, all right, ma cheli!"

Then Ah La would see Teraii with his strings of fish, and something like the following conversation would take place:—

Ah La, with a cunning glint in his ratlike eyes: "You got fish, yes? You sell him?"

Teraii, surlily: "No, Tinito; these are for my oven."

Ah La: "You got too much fish, all right. Nevva mind, oh yes, I buy him all."

Teraii: surlily: "They are for my oven."

Ah La: "You tie him on here... . No? ... You savvy you owe me too much money. You tie him on here, oh yes!"

Teraii: "Take them, Chinaman; but you pay me half of five francs for them."

Ah La: "All right. Nevva mind. I give you one franc, one string. Oh yes; no much money now. You no like buy one tin beef? No? Goo-bye. Giddap horse. I go! Iaorana everybody!"

And with an abject leer Ah La would clatter away, more than likely to sell Teraii's fish to the next group for two francs fifty centimes a string.

In the course of the morning's business Ah La may have given credit to fifty people and received money from none. The newcomer wonders how he will collect. But it is not long before he sees Ah La strolling through the village, down the beach and into the valley plantations, a holiday smile on his tea-yellow face, his feet cased in tan squeaking shoes, his emaciated body in unironed cotton trousers and coat. He visits each Vaiiti family with the exception of Solomon's and mine; he stops to chat with the men in the gardens and groves, to ogle the women washing clothes in the river, and, if business has been good, even to give a few candies to the children.

"Ai ya! Te Tinito, ehere te maamaa!" the people shout when they see him coming. (Ai ya! The Chinaman, he's a wise one!)

Ah La grins sheepishly, shakes everybody by the hand clammily, gives the father a cigarette, the wife a compliment, the daughter a leer. But his sharp little eyes are shifting this way and that, missing nothing. He sees that Paetahua is making copra, Faatomo has a fine fat pig, Faiipo's vanilla is ripe, Mama-Reretu is picking the seeds from her kapok harvest, the ground under Pauoto's trees is thick with coconuts.

Ah La does not ask these people to pay their accounts; he only mentions to Paetahua that when his copra is dry he can bring it to the store instead of sending it to Papeete where the price is higher; to Faatomo, that this afternoon will do as well as another to drive the pig over to the shop and help him butcher it. He reminds Faiipo that he must not sell his vanilla to another Chinaman; and explains to Mama-Reretu, who is picking the kapok to make a pillow for Tomi, that he will pay her four francs a kilo for it and that she must pick more, for her account is large. He tells Pauoto that he will send a cart for the coconuts in the morning.

If they refuse to part with their property, Ah La only grins, shrugs his shoulders, and with an "Aita peapea" (Nevva mind) he returns to his shop. A few days later Mutoi, the policeman, appears to the debtor with a summons to court, and in a short time another Vaiiti family is without land, while the Chinaman's pastures have widened.

Thus the newcomer soon learns that the Chinaman is delighted to give the landed Tahitians credit, and he will continue to do so until he owns every corner of land on the island—a condition which has virtually come to pass today.

Perhaps the only remedy would have been the enactment of laws to protect the Tahitians against themselves: to forbid them to buy on credit, or

the traders to sell on credit save at their own risk. For after all, the Tahitians are as irresponsible as children, and one would not be justified in selling sweets to a child and then attaching his inheritance to liquidate the debt... . But the means of preventing a crime against a Golden Age is never thought of until the Golden Age has come to an end.

Chinese-Tahitian Linguistics

Wherever the Chinaman has established himself he has introduced his own culture. From his religion to his culinary arts, his agriculture to his opium pipe, he has remained Chinese in spite of an incongruous environment. In his language, though, he has been forced to capitulate; but rather than learn the language of the country of his adoption, always he has invented one of his own: a compromise between Chinese and the new tongue, which will be understood but will be distinctly Chinese in its genius.

This the Chinamen did in Tahiti, and their compromise proved to be a masterpiece of condensation, adequate for expounding any subject to a listener of imagination, and so simple in grammar that it was soon adopted by the Europeans in their intercourse with the natives, and later, to a lesser degree, by the Tahitians themselves.

In this language they probably used no more than four verbs, and the newcomers among them managed handsomely with one, the verb “to make”—hamani. Everything was hamani with them: to catch fish, to build a house, to drive a horse, to bake bread, was hamani fish, hamani house, hamani horse, hamani bread. Likewise to sell fish, paint a house, catch a horse, butter bread, was hamani fish, and so on.

If I met a one-verb Chinaman leaving his store, and asked in Chinese-Tahitian vernacular, “Eaha oe hamani, Tinito?” (What you make, Chinaman?), and received the reply, “Wo hamani puaahorofenua” (I make horse), I knew instantly that the Chinaman had meant: “I am going to the pasture to catch my horse.” But if there was a horse and wagon standing before the shop, and the Chinaman was approaching it, then the assumption was that he had intended to say that he was going for a drive.

It will be seen from the above what is meant by the language being “adequate for expounding any subject to a listener of imagination.”

But if instead of saying, “Wo hamani puaahorofenua” (I make horse), the Chinaman had reversed the words and said, “Wo puaahorofenua hamani” (My horse make), then I guessed that the implication had been: “I am going to hunt for my horse that has run away.” In this case the pronoun

wo (Tahitian vau) had been changed to the possessive “my”; the noun had remained unchanged; the verb hamani had become intransitive by being transposed to the end of the sentence.

Still again, if the Chinaman had said, “Hamani wo puaahorofenua” (Make my horse), I could deduce from the environment whether the one-verb man had meant “Shoe my horse,” “Hitch my horse,” or “Bury my horse.”

The Chinaman found still other ways of arranging the above words and thereby changing their sense, as “Puaahorofenua hamani wo!” (The horse has kicked me!), or “Puaahorofenua wo hamani” (The horse I kicked), or “Hamani puaahorofenua wo” (I shall kick the horse).

When the Chinaman had mastered the verb “to make” he studied a second one, “to go”—haere, pronounced by him halay. In some ways this was an unimportant verb, for hamani could be used in its place.

Often I heard a Chinaman use “Hamani puaahorofenua” and “Halay puaahorofenua” indiscriminately for to drive, feed, catch, whip, a horse. So long as the word before the noun denoted action it made little difference what word was used.

If a transitive verb was required, the “action word” was simply placed before, instead of after, the noun. Halay, as a transitive verb, would fit in the sentence, “Wo halay puaahorofenua” (I drive—eat, feed, paint, and so forth—the horse).

As an intransitive verb it was placed after the noun, as “Wo puaahorofenua halay” (My horse drives—eats, feeds, paints).

Next the Chinaman blossomed into the “three-verb” man by learning the difficult and important verb “parahi” (Chinese-Tahitian, palahi), to remain. If his horse was in the stable, on the road, dead and in the ground, it was simply palahi the stable, palahi the road, palahi the ground, save that the Chinaman never troubled with such refinements as articles—and often, of course, by way of variation, substituted one of his other verbs, as his mood dictated.

Again, if a Chinaman merely owned a horse, palahi became “I possess,” as:

Question: “Puaahorofenua palahi, Tinito?” (Horse remains, Chinaman? That is, You have a horse?)

Reply: “Puaahorofenua palahi” (Horse remains; or, I have a horse).

If I went into a shop for bread, I might ask: “Faraoa palahi?” (Have you any bread?) and receive the succinct reply: “Palahi” (Yes; I have bread).

And if Boulgasse stopped on sight of a man carrying fish, and a Chinaman was present, inevitably he would ask: “Oe puaahorofenua palahi?” (Your horse remains; or, Has your horse balked?) Then, when we touched Boulgasse with the whip, the Chinaman would charge us with “Hamani puaahorofenua” (Making—whipping—horse). Then, of course, when Boulgasse flung a nasty hoof at the dashboard, we would be told: “Puaahorofenua hamani oe” (The horse is kicking you). And when Boulgasse, on his own initiative, started off again, it would be a case of: “Ai-ya!”—a Chinese exclamation absorbed into the Tahitian,—Horse go! No remain!

The fourth and last verb the Chinaman mastered was mo, “to get.” Probably it was selected because of its similarity to the Tahitian word mau, “to grasp.” However, it was a useful one, taking the place of “to make” in many instances, or used indiscriminately for any of the three other verbs. Such difficult verbs as “to understand, engage, assemble, accumulate, monopolize, remember,” were all covered adequately by mo, as was the adjective “excellent”: “Ta-‘ata mo” (Man get; meaning one who has acquired things, among them, presumably, excellence).

By the time the Chinaman mastered mo he had also a few nouns and adjectives, two or three pronouns, and was skilled in the art of negating almost any word in his vocabulary. This was done by the use of the word aita—“no.”

He found that a thorough mastery of aita almost halved his necessary vocabulary. For instance, one word would do for good and bad, pretty and ugly, work and rest; but some Chinamen became so addicted to the use of the negative that they would say “aita ino” (no bad) for “good”; and “aita maitai” (no good) for “bad.” If I asked such a man if he had bread, he would reply: “Bread no remains” if he had none; and, “Aita peapea” (No trouble) if he had some. The latter seemed to be an affirmation that all was well with the world, including the bread supply, while aita maitai (no good) was an expression of adversity.

Finally: Mei te mea te palau maitai aita mea puhe reo i roto, wo manao reo Tinito te palau hau-roa no pauloa fenua. Which is translated, freely: If the ideal language consists of the most simplified sounds by which

communication can occur between people, then the Chinese-Tahitian is a language that makes basic English complex by comparison.

The Shop of Ah Jong

I rose before dawn, and with my shotgun and a few cartridges walked up the weed-grown path to the road. There Tuahu and Tomi awaited me, seated in Solomon's buggy, behind the trusty though temperamental Boulgasse.

"Whoops! We're going to the Tinito for coffee!" Tomi shouted as I jumped in; then Boulgasse leaped forward, pitching me back in the seat, and we were off in true Vaitian style.

"Iaorana, Tuahu and the others! May you live!" came from a shadowy figure at the roadside as we dashed past.

"Iaorana, Toto!" Tuahu called back. "You are up early!"

The next instant we were too far away to hear Toto's reply, for Boulgasse was thundering down the road like a charging war horse, his head stretched out, his ears laid back, his nostrils dilated and snorting. Oh, it was a grand ride in the crisp morning air; and full of the exhilarating element of risk, for if Teraii, the net fisherman, had appeared on the road earlier than usual, Lord knows from what ditches and trees the neighbors would have had to extricate us!

Presently Tomi asked me why I had sent for Boulgasse; ordinarily we walked to the Chinaman's shop when we felt rich enough to indulge in one of Ah Jong's petits dejeuners.

"I am going on a journey, Tomi, a long way away."

"Can I go too?"

"No, Tomi; for I am going high up in the mountains to visit the nature men—the natura."

"Hm! That's a foolish kind of journey," Tomi opined. "Now, if you were going to Papeete—or even to America ..."

"Whoa!" Tuahu shouted just then; and because Boulgasse was entirely of the same mind we came to a sliding stop before the Chinaman's shop.

The place was aglow with light, and old Ah Jong himself, his thin mustache drooping, his face cadaverous, and his eyes clouded with opium, presided behind his counter. A few of our neighbors had come for their morning coffee. Atua sat in the white dignity of his years by the door,

talking with the strong man, Faiipo. Pauoto was in one corner, grinning in his schoolboyish way. Tevearai the loud-mouthed; Tuahu's grown-up boy Faatomo; Solomon in one of his spendthrift moods, wasting a franc for coffee that he might have had for nothing at home—all were at the tables, drinking sweet black coffee and eating elastic figure-of-eight doughnuts. And all were chattering; but noisier still were the half-dozen Chinese shopkeepers, gardeners, bakers, and the horde of children.

Sitting at a table outside the big open door, we called for coffee and bread. Tomi ordered his own. "Tinito!" he shouted to the venerable Ah Jong—"Chinaman! Bring coffee with plenty of sugar—three tablespoonfuls! And bread and butter! Hurry up, old crooked-legs, can't you see that I'm a busy man?" And then, mimicking the sighing voice of Nui-woman: "Oh, these Chinamen! These Chinamen!"

Tomi, like every Tahitian youngster, loved to insult the Chinamen. It was one of the perquisites of both youth and age among the otherwise courteous Tahitians. The Chinamen did not seem to mind. Probably the Tahitians' invectives were mild in comparison to those that they had been accustomed to along the Canton river front; and they knew that in the end the childish people of the islands would pay for each ungentle word.

Ah Jong's place was as squalid as the rest of the Chinese shops of Tahiti; but there was a certain felicitous atmosphere created by the good fellowship of the neighbors who waxed garrulous over their steaming cups, by the smell of fresh bread and coffee and such things, and, more than anything else, by this morsel of the Orient itself, grafted so thoroughly and successfully into Polynesian life. Ah Jong, like all the others, had built his shop as he would have built it in Canton, from scraps of old lumber, packing cases, and bamboo, with a roof of tin cut from kerosene tins, a ceiling of old flour bags, and windows of plaited reeds. And of course, there was not an outer wall without its lean-to hen house, stable, or duck house; and there was not a corner of the yard without its pigpen or a foot of ground without its mud puddle. Fowls were everywhere, inside the shop and outside, laying and cackling indiscriminately in the hen house, the bread wagon, or the flour bins; and ducks of every feather vied their quackings with the grunts of pigs and the screams of slant-eyed unkempt children.

In the back of the shop, Ah Jong's daughter-in-law, Mrs. Ah La, sat from dawn till dark by the vanilla sorting table, her long stained fingers running deftly over the beans, graduating them in little piles for size and

quality, tying them into bunches, touching them with almost affectionate fingers. One of her sandaled feet worked a rope which had been attached to the cradle of her latest born: and here I may as well mention that the cradle was never empty, for when one baby was able to toddle out into the muddy yard among the ducks and pigs, another had arrived to take its place. And so the rocking motion went on, year after year; a backward jerk of the foot and the cradle rocked, the spring by which it was suspended from the tie beam squeaked, and the baby slept. And when the baby cried the mother gave it her full breast until it slept again, when she returned to her vanilla and her cradle rocking. This, as far as Western eyes could see, was the entire life of Mrs. Ah La—and all her countrywomen. But a Western observer could not fail to understand that in Tahiti almost all the babies lived, soon to overrun the island and exterminate the less hardy and fecund race, while in China famine and flood came to exterminate, mercifully.

Old Ah Jong himself brought our coffee, took my francs, leered not unpleasantly, and shuffled back into the shop. I lighted a cigarette, smoked, sipped my coffee, and, only half listening to the gossiping in the store, watched the first tinge of daylight bringing the mountains of Vaiti into faint relief. The sight always amazed me, though I had seen it many times. It was like some picture of fantastic mountains in a child's book of fairy tales. I could not view those weirdly modeled spires behind Vaiti without a troubling sensation of awe. And what a contrast they made to the Chinaman's shop, its Orientals and Polynesians chattering like a flock of mynas, its incongruous smells of vanilla, pigs, coffee, fresh bread, copra, dried fish, and exotic herbs!

Soon I would be among the mountains, in the strange haunt of the nature men. I had been there before and would go often in the future, for it was like a journey to a foreign country, breaking agreeably the monotony of Vaiti existence. And when I had spent a day in the hills I should be glad to return to the prosaic lowlands.

Presently my attention was turned to Atua, who had risen and was reading a poster he had received from Papeete:

ATTENTION!

Vaitians! This is the new talk!
There will be a cinema at

Le Palais des Beaux-Arts Cinematographique
on Saturday night at 9 o'clock, March the 31st.

Come and see

WILLIAM COWBOY

the horse-breaking, villain-killing, woman-loving,
law-breaking hero who will be at Vaitii on Saturday!

Come and watch him shoot off both his guns at once
--one in the right hand, one in the left hand--

BANG! BANG!

Two more red-handed bad-men bite the dust, and
William Cowboy rides off on his pinto bronco, the
beautiful red-haired weeping maiden in his arms!

WHOOPS! BANG! CRASH!

Come one, come all, from the babe in arms to the
old grandpa! Here we go to see the greatest
bloodcurdling hair-raising heart-rending spectacle
of the age!

WILLIAM COWBOY
in the superfilm

THE JACK OF DIAMONDS

Two francs a seat, and no charge for the world-champion,
the inimitable, the only

MOUSIEUR POROI

IN PERSON

Atua finished, folded the paper carefully, placed it in his coat pocket, and with a questioning glance about the room sat down. For some time no one spoke; then, of course, Pauoto had to make the inevitable remark:

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "There will be a cinema Saturday night!"

I laughed outright. The remark had seemed such an absurd contradiction to the tense, almost electric atmosphere about me.

"What is the matter, Ropati?"

"Oh, nothing.....I was just thinking about William Cowboy."

Tuahu looked sharply at me, and asked: "Do you happen you know William Cowboy, Ropati?"

"Yes, slightly," I replied.

Tuahu said no more at the time, but I could see that he was astounded, and I felt vaguely that already I had said more than I should.

"William Cowboy!" Tomi muttered. There was a note of excitement in his voice; his big eyes sparkled.

Faiipo looked up from his cup to ask Tevearai if he was going to the cinema.

"Of course not," the loud-mouthed man lied.

"Nor am I," lied Faiipo. "Cinemas are for women and children." Then, a moment later: "But perhaps I might go," he muttered glumly. "The wife and child children, you know."

"Yes," agreed Tevearai; "and who knows but that my old woman and brats will lug me along too. But I despise cinemas, particularly William Cowboy ones!"

"How about you, Atua?"

"I am going!" Atua replied honestly.

"So am I!" Tomi piped, whereby I knew that there were at least two honest persons in the room.

I turned to Tuaha. "Are you going?" I asked.

And my old foster father made a third honest man by saying fervently: "I would not miss a William Cowboy cinema for all the money in the world!"

I rose then, for it was nearly sunrise, and I had far to go that day. As Tuahu and Tomi followed me to the buggy we could hear neighbors loudly discussing William Cowboy, and I gathered that he whom I had known as William S. Hart was a truly illustrious person to the Vaiitians.

The Nature Men

Tuahu and Tomi left me at the foot of Farue Valley, where the trail began. First there was a river to ford; then a jungle of lemon hibiscus and lantana which rose steeply into plantations of tropic foods, patches of vanilla, and forests of oranges and mummy apples, mangoes, and alligator pears. These thinned out where I crossed a hill, barren save for bracken and a few stunted guava bushes. Three miles away, on a razor-backed ridge, the house of Stonehill was dimly visible; beyond towered the mountains of Farue, their peaks glistening with the light of the sun. The trail dropped downward, then, and I entered the Tahitian jungle.

Tall gray-green trees with wide curtain like buttresses; lichen-encrusted trunks a hundred feet to the first boughs; monster orchids and ferns clinging to the damp bark, outlandish, reeking moisture: grotesque parasitic things hanging from the limbs like water moccasins; serpentine convolvulus twining everywhere. Above, a canopy of dark green leaves; below, perpetual twilight. There is no underbrush, no grass; only the crawling roots of the island chestnuts, the long lianas hanging from the branches, the strange silences and the strange noises.

Sometimes the gloom of the Tahitian jungle is depressing, almost frightful; at other times it mellows one until unconsciously he shortens his step to prolong his time in that uncanny fastness. That day I stopped in the midst of the jungle to rest between the buttresses of an island chestnut, to muse and listen. A nut fell through the foliage with a startlingly loud clatter; then silence so palpable that I almost believed I could see and feel it. A rustle of leaves overhead; the melancholy cooing of an island dove in a long-drawn-out note followed by a dozen more, shorter, softer, and more dolorous toward the end. A sleek blue-and-gold lizard made a clicking sound in the leaves, and then again uncanny silence, to be shattered by the crow of a rooster.

For a moment I became alert and stared through the dimly lit corridors of the forest. Again stillness settled over the weird place, and it was difficult to make myself believe that it had been broken by so prosaic a thing as a fowl.

I have read of the forests of Nepal, and for years have dreamed of visiting that forbidden country. I have read of lines of elephants tramping through the interminable forest; and now, as I stared down the winding aisles between the trees to where they were lost in the twilight of early morning, I imagined that such a setting would fit better in unexplored Nepal; and for a moment I fancied I could see obscurely defined elephants, red-caparisoned, trodding the forest about me with slow deliberate steps.

Again, the crow of a rooster, and soon he appeared, accompanied by a little brown hen no larger than a grouse. They were gnomish creatures, pert and industrious, clucking, crowing, and scratching through the gloomy forest with as little concern as though they were safely ensconced in a barnyard. I knew they would take flight if they saw me, for these mountain fowls are wonderful creatures on the wing; but the buttresses hid me effectively.

I am no sportsman, nor have I any sympathy for the sportsman's code. I carry a sixteen-gauge pump gun which brings sighs to my friends' lips; and I prefer shooting a bird when it is close to me and quite motionless. I shoot this way because of the greater certainty of getting my bird. I tell my huntsman friends that their idea of sportsmanship implies a vicious desire to kill. It thrills them to wing a bird and see it die. Many of them kill a dozen birds, on the wing; in the authorized manner, with the authorized weapon, but only for the pleasure of killing, for rarely do they need so much meat. If I were able to shoot a bird on the wing I should take no more pleasure in it than in decapitating a barnyard rooster. Both acts are barbarous, and so long as one kills for food one may as well admit himself a barbarian, no matter how the killing is done.

On the present occasion I waited until both fowls were close together; then, with my gun steadied on top of one of the buttresses, I aimed carefully and shot them both with one shell, in an unsportsmanlike manner. The roar of the gun reverberated through the forest alarmingly; it made me feel that I had violated a sanctuary.

In another half hour I was on the ridge leading to Stonehill's house. The last five hundred yards was very steep, and I should have hesitated to climb it had I not seen the nature men's pumpkins growing on the vertiginous mountainside—they were propped up with little sticks to keep them from rolling down into the valley. I was ashamed to turn back. It seemed that

where a pumpkin could carry on I could, so I climbed on and reached the house.

Stonehill's home was perched on a peak little more than big enough to hold it. Cliffs fell from three sides while on the fourth was the steep slope I had climbed. The view was superb, with the azure-blue water of Farue Bay seemingly at my feet; and surrounding the bay, on all sides of the peak, the lofty verdured mountains, grotesquely modeled, sombre and unearthly. But I took only a glance; then slipped quickly into the house. And when, through the window, I saw Stonehill's naked children playing on the edge of a precipice, and his wife complacently hanging clothes to dry over an abyss, it did not lessen my dizziness.

From the first time I had heard of Stonehill I had been convinced that he was mad as a hatter. He must have been so, else how could he have lived in such a place? My Vaiiti neighbors called him the "Man-o'-War Hawk" (Te Otaa), and frightened their children by saying that he would swoop down and carry them to his nest to feed his fledglings. But mad or sane, he was a harmless man with a sound philosophy: to live in peace, simply, and with as little effort as possible. If wild cats caught his chickens, and pigs rooted up his garden, he shrugged his shoulders stoically, loaded his gun, and went after the cats and pigs. The pleasure of killing them would recompense him for his loss. Anyway, life had never treated him kindly, and he expected little from it now. When things went wrong it was his own fault; when they went well he gave himself the credit.

We had a few glasses of homemade wine while he told me of his life as a stoker, and how he had saved enough money to buy his peak. He would never leave it, he said. When I asked him why he had bought such a dizzy place, he explained that he enjoyed the view and the fresh air, that the cliffs grew fine pumpkins and vanilla, that his fowls kept fat and his children healthy, and that his brown wife was too far from the beach to make love to the native boys. I wanted to ask if he were not trying to escape from something—a memory, perhaps, or a parent, but I refrained.

A few hundred yards from him, on the same ridge, stood the house of Nielsen, a tall, sombre, taciturn man who was working on a perpetual-motion machine. He hid his contraption under the bed when I approached, and refused to discuss it; but he was glad to tell me that he had made a coffee husker which would take off more than half the husks.

It had been years since he had left his ridge and gone down to the sea; but I imagine that on fine days, when he looked out over the barrier reef, far below him, and on to the whitecap-stippled sea; and when he felt a fresh trade wind blowing across his weather-beaten face, and smelt the salt in the air—at such times he must have hankered after the old days and wished himself on a full-rigged ship again, rather than trying to live the life he had visualized during years at sea under hard masters. Neilsen's isolation may have been a defensive act against the amenities of civilization which he had never had the means to enjoy.

Beyond Neilsen's, on the same ridge, lived Jamie, an American. His front verandah protruded four feet over a precipice; but the slope behind his house was a jungle of mummy apples, breadfruit, island chestnuts, alligator pears, yams, mangoes, coconuts, oranges, limes. He amused himself snaring wild pigs and fowls, and these, with fruit and his home-grown vegetables and tobacco, supplied his needs. He told me that he lived on fifty dollars a year, which he spent for clothes and books. Of the latter there were some old favorites in his library: George Borrow, Villon, even a Doughty's *Arabia Deserta*. Jamie was the only one of the nature men who did not seem abnormal. I dined with him that day; then turned back to Farue Valley and followed another trail, to the house of Hans Grun.

The House of Hans Grun

Hans Grun had a dollhouse affair of two stories, with five tiny rooms fitted out with German neatness and ingenuity. There was a place for everything. Little cupboards had been built in the corners, above the doors, and under the windows and staircase; there were inventions by Neilsen to keep the windows open and the doors shut; there were homemade tools, a tobacco cutter, a wheelbarrow, a rabbit warren, a duck, fish, and shrimp pool with a fountain and flower-bedded border, a fowl run, a horse pasture, vegetable terraces dug out of the hillside. And in the house were the essential comforts: running water, screened windows, and a home-brew tub. But to me, the felicity of Hans's place was in its absence of radio, electric lights, and such unhomely things. There were plenty of books, however, a fine stove, good kerosene lamps that were always trimmed, comfortable beds, and, more important than all of these, freedom from annoyance.

Hans was an elderly man with the sound and wholesome philosophy of life so common among his people. He was sufficient to himself; and only such a man would have been content to live in such a wild and unfrequented place. Hans was ingenious, as his house testified, taciturn, and a recluse save on the rare days when he kept open house. Then he opened the floodgates of his being, and there was a merry time at Farue.

But sometimes, when I gazed at him and he was unaware of my attention gnomish about him. Then I would remember the strange fowls that seemed to have adapted themselves to the genius of their forest; and it would occur to me that all these nature men had likewise adapted themselves to the spirit of their environment. Neilsen was stoical, introverted; Stonehill a misanthrope, self-sufficient and meditative; Jamie an intelligent savage; and Hans, though a brighter character, was still gnomish—a creature of unfrequented places rather than a member of the familiar world.

I arrived at Hans's house at five o'clock, just as he was leaving to go to the pasture with his horse's daily ration of water grass, bananas, and giant carrots. He asked me to make myself at home, so I went into his living room and sat by the large window that overlooked the bowl of Farue Valley.

It was profoundly quiet. The wind was still; only from below in the valley came the low murmur of the stream. Glancing from the window, I could look over a mile of forest and jungle, undulating, broken by lights and shadows, like the top of a cloud rack seen from a mountain peak. Beyond, the low bracken hills led to a circle of peaks that guarded the Farue basin. Their heights still glowed with sunlight, but over the valley,

... such light as twinkles in a wood ...

settled softly on the recumbent jungles. Sometimes a starling would fly over the sea of trees, and once a flock of wild ducks winged clamoring past on their way to the rice paddies. Perhaps some such mountainous country as this inspired Maurice de Guerin when he wrote:

... The line of mountains to the west retained the imprint of gleams not perfectly wiped out by the shadows. In that quarter still survived, in pale clearness, mountain summits naked and pure. There I beheld at one time the god Pan descend, ever solitary; at another, the choir of mystic divinities; or I saw pass some mountain nymph charm-struck by the night. Sometimes the eagles of Mount Olympus traversed the upper sky, and were lost to view among the far-off constellations, or in the shade of the dreaming forest... .

That night Hans and I sat down to a few games of pinochle. We had made a punch of Burgundy, limes, and brown sugar, and we sipped it slowly as we played a desultory game, broken by conversation.

As the night wore on I observed an unaccountable nervousness coming over my friend. He seemed to be holding himself under control with considerable effort, and I wondered if there were something he wished to say, or if I were annoying him by remaining for the night. After the third game he gathered up the cards, and said:

“Now I must go to bed. You can sleep in the room upstairs... . Good night,” and he nodded his little head while the trace of an unhappy smile appeared on his lips.

He picked up one of the lamps and went to his room. A few moments later I climbed to the tiny cupola affair perched on the roof of the house. It was about ten feet square, with a large low window in each wall, giving one a complete view of Farue Valley.

On a table, with their backs against the wall, were three pictures, each of a buxom girl in her twenties, dressed in wedding regalia, and with her husband standing by her side. And near by was a photograph of an old German woman in the quaint costume of Baden. These were Hans's daughters, all safely married, and his old mother in the Black Forest of Germany.

As I looked at the pictures I wondered if Hans ever regretted the old days when these girls were smiling babies, or when he himself was a child and the old German woman a young mother, fondling him. He was far away from that life now.

I blew out the light and lay back on the couch; I would undress later, I thought.

Presently a waning moon rose over the mountains: a cheerless moon, haloed and ominous. The black sea of jungle broke into fantastic traceries of light and shadow; the peaks threw long shadows across the bracken hills; and in the room a pale yellow light revealed the three pictures of Hans's daughters, and that of the old German woman, peering ghostlike from the shadows.

Then a curtain of mackerel clouds formed high overhead. They massed together by perceptible degrees; the moon dimmed and disappeared; a puff of wind ruffled the alligator-pear trees and a low purling sound came from the chestnut forest. Raindrops fell, ringing like tiny bells on the iron roof. I closed the windows and listened to the wind whining in the jungle and about the window embrasures.

I woke at two in the morning. Rain was pouring on the roof while half a gale of wind screamed through the darkness of Farue Valley. A light shone through the chinks in the door. Jumping from the cot, I opened the door and glanced down the stairway.

Hans was at the table playing solitaire. As he dealt the cards I noticed his hands twitch nervously. He fidgeted in his chair; and again I felt instinctively that he was in trouble. Each motion of his fingers, the rigid way he held his head, even his quickened breath, seemed to tell of a struggle against some vague unnamable fear.

Abruptly he turned his head, and for perhaps fifteen seconds stared fixedly across his shoulder into the shadows. Then he sighed, relaxed, and returned to his game.

I thought I understood his nervousness then: it was one of the afflictions of a solitary life, such as Coleridge described in the unforgettable lines:

Like one that on a lonesome road Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head,
Because he knows a frightful fiend Doth close behind him tread.

In Hans's case perhaps the frightful fiend was himself. Men living in solitude learn too much about themselves, and it frightens them.

I waited a few moments before going down and joining him.

"It's too noisy to sleep, Hans," I said. "I noticed the light, so I thought I would come down."

He gathered up the cards and replaced them with the pinochle deck. "Yes," he said in his slow way, choosing his words carefully and delivering them distinctly; "it is raining hard, but we are used to that in the mountains of Tahiti."

The mountains of Tahiti! The words came to me almost as a shock. I had forgotten that I was on the same island with Tuahu, Terii, and mama-Reretu.

"If the river is flooded I will not be able to return in the morning," I said as Hans dealt the cards. "In that case I shall be a nuisance."

"No," he replied, "I shall be glad to have you here." He glanced at me thoughtfully before going on: "A man enjoys solitude only if he can enjoy people too. One adds zest to the other. I love my mountain home and the self-indulgent life an old man feels he has earned ... but there are drawbacks to solitude ... and there are strange fancies that possess one."

"Are you happy here, Hans?"

"Yes; perhaps I am."

The nervousness was coming over him again. As he went on I wondered if he realized how insincere his words sounded. "I am living a cowardly life, some would say," he said, still speaking slowly, but choosing his words with even greater care: "escaping from the world to seclude myself in the mountains of a tropic island... It is a negative existence ... but I am happy."

"Speak a little louder, Hans; the noise of the wind drowns your words."

“I have my books; and when they tire me I wander through the jungle hunting wild pigs or fowls; or I wade up the streams after shrimps and those fine eels that live in the deeper pools... . I hear the noise of the world only as an indistinct murmur, but it warns me to stay in my mountains... . But sometimes, when I am restless, I climb to Stonehill’s ridge and look down at the villages, the dirty Chinamen’s shops, and the traffic along the road. Then the noise of the outside world reaches me more distinctly; I return home, content for a time.”

He turned his head quickly to glance for an instant into the shadows. The rain had stopped. I returned to my room, feeling that he needed company and at the same time wished to be alone: a strange paradox but a common one.

I left early in the morning, for the river was not too high to ford.

“How long has it been since you were down to the sea?” I asked as we shook hands.

“About a year,” he replied dully.

“Better come down and visit me. How about today? There’s going to be a big cinema, you know.”

Not a glimmer of interest came into Hans’s eyes. “Good-bye,” he said. “Come again, sometime... . No; I will not go to the cinema... .” And then he laughed, mirthlessly, in a way that I could not understand.

I was glad to turn my steps toward my normal and kindly neighbors.

William Cowboy

As I walked briskly down the Farue Valley my thoughts turned to the cinema. Of course I would go. It was a part of Vaiiti life, and a big part, more important to me, and perhaps to my neighbors too, than the church festival. Here was one thing that compensated the Tahitians, in a small way, for the abolition of savage revelries. The missionaries had taken most of the joy from native life, and many of them looked askance at even the cinema; but it had held its own, and I believe that most of my neighbors would have renounced their religion sooner than their cinema.

“William S. Hart—William Cowboy!” I thought, recalling the time, years before, when, with a stock saddle across my shoulder and my spurs jingling, I had walked the three miles from Santa Monica to Inceville, and had gone to work for William S. Hart. It was the proudest day of my life; I would not have traded positions with President Wilson or John D. Rockefeller or even Buffalo Bill! I had become a moving-picture actor; my cup was overflowing!

Up to the end of 1916 I trod on enchanted ground, in a kind of bewildered exaltation. There were days “on location” when a dozen of us “ranch boys” rode hard, yelled, fired our six-shooters in the air, and took falls that would have killed anyone save a man rendered tough as whitleather by the knowledge that the cameras were recording his feats for posterity.

But best of all were the days when we “worked” in the barroom sets, from morning to night, simulating the proper hard-boiled expression as we tossed off glasses of nauseating colored water, gesticulating, registering drunkenness, yarning with the bartenders, flirting with the dance-hall girls as we would never have dared to in real life, gambling, sometimes fighting. William S. Hart moved among us, drank with us, slapped us on the back, lined us along the wall with the muzzles of his six-shooters, or knocked us sprawling when the scenario required it.

And through it all the cameras clicked out a music sweet to our ears; and the lenses recorded Western pictures that, to my mind, have never been equaled. One of them was *The Jack of Diamonds*. After having been shown

in the big theatres, and the small ones down to the most unpretentious nickelodeon, it had finally been brought to Tahiti, and was now to be shown in the last, perhaps, of its temporary homes: Le Palais des Beaux-Arts Cinematographique!

When I had left Farue Valley and was swinging through Vaiiti, I noticed that all the neighbors were preparing for the coming night.

“Iaorana, Nui-woman!” I called as I passed her house. “I see your good man is boiling island chestnuts.”

“Iaorana, Ropati! Yes; they are for the cinema! The man has decided to go, so I must sell a few strings of mape nuts to earn money for our tickets.”

“I see you are ironing clothes, Tetuanui!” I shouted a few moments later. “What a beautiful pink dress!”

“Ah yes,” she called back; “it is for the cinema, you know. Perhaps we will go to see William Cowboy tonight.”

And as I passed Pauoto’s house: “What are you going to do with that great basinful of frying-pan bread, Pauoto-woman? Can it be that you are going to the cinema?”

“Yes, Ropati,” she replied, smiling. “Pauoto has gone to the Chinaman to borrow money for our tickets; but I know that Ah Jong will give him none, so I am frying a few little cakes to sell. Perhaps you will buy one tonight, Ropati?”

“That I will, Pauoto-woman. Tomi and Terii and I will eat our fill of them!”

A little farther along I saw Tuahu’s son Faatomo standing in his yard, his hands on his hips, surveying with great satisfaction an immense ice-cream grinder.

“Mape nuts, frying-pan bread, and ice cream for Tomi and Terii tonight,” I thought. “Lucky their digestions are in good order!”

Then I passed Faiipo, who was driving a cart loaded with watermelons, and behind him Tevearai, dragging a pig to Ah Jong’s shop. Solomon’s house came next. The Hebrew-Polynesian was standing in his yard, near the road, smeared with grease from head to foot, his lightning wagon lying about him in a heap of bolts, springs, tin, machinery, gadgets.

“A little engine trouble, eh, Solomon?” I called cheerily.

He glanced up with knitted brows. “I got it apart all right,” he growled, “but I can’t get it together again!” Then, leaning over to pick up a

nondescript piece of machinery, he asked: "Perhaps you can tell me what this thing is, Ropati?"

"Perhaps it is a carburetor," I replied at a venture.

He held it close to his beaked nose to examine it critically with his one good eye. "A carburetor?" he muttered dubiously. "Hm! Who knows? Perhaps it is a carburetor; but I thought it might be a magneto, or maybe a piston ring... I can't make it fit anywhere!"

"But why all the engine repairing, Solomon?"

"It is because of this foolish cinema," he grumbled. "I had thought to drive to the cinema to-night."

I turned from Solomon to enter the Chinaman's shop. There, also, was unusual commotion. Old Ah Jong was oiling and touching up with paint a great Wheel of Fortune; in the back of the shop Ah La stood over a cauldron of hot grease, boiling figure-of-eight doughnuts, while Mrs. Ah La had left her vanilla table and her latest born to string wreaths of gardenias and frangipani. They would make more out of the cinema tonight than would Monsieur Poroi, owner of Le Palais des Beaux-Arts Cinematographique.

At Tuahu's house I found Terii ironing a great heap of clothes as she chatted with Mama-Reretu, who was sewing a gorgeous wreath of artificial flowers on her hat. Tuahu tended the native oven, which would be opened when we returned late at night. And Tomi—he was just running back and forth and around in circles, too excited to be responsible for his actions. At times he would whoop: "Ai-ya! Cinema tonight!" Then he would jump into the river, stand on his hands to wiggle his toes above the water, swim to the bank, yelling: "I'm going to the cinema tonight!" and then turn handsprings across Mama-Reretu pineapple patch as he shouted something or other about William Cowboy, and frying-pan bread, and island chestnuts, and ice cream.

It seemed lonely down at my house on the beach. Not a soul was in sight; and it was very quiet, for the seas were low on the reef and only a breeze rustled the alligator-pear tree. I felt that I must have company, so I got out my whitest and starchiest suit, a blue silk shirt, a violent tie, tanned shoes with fancy toes, and loud socks; and with the holiday hat Terii had made for me I returned up the path to Tuahu's house, there to await the night.

At dusk we had a light meal of tea and bread; then we dressed in our flashy clothes; and when Tuahu and Mama-Reretu had donned the last of their finery, it seemed that they had shuffled at least ten years from their lives. Tuahu was transformed to almost a young man when he had shaved, his hair had been cut, and he had put on his white suit with the big pearl-shell buttons. Mama-Reretu was no longer the quiet little old lady who spent her days under the mango tree by the Vaiiti River; now she was a middle-aged matronly person, somewhat overdressed, taking a fling at life with the youngsters.

Terii was entirely lovely in her filmy pongee dress with the trimmings of lace and the garland of flowers round her slim waist. There were gold rings in her ears, a big paste diamond on one of her fingers, and her feet were squeezed into little white shoes that would bring envy to the hearts of the other Vaiiti maidens. But the most charming thing about Terii was her hair: it hung loosely down her back, its jet-black ripples accentuated by the white gardenias behind her ears.

Tomi was rigged up in a sailor suit I had bought him, and thus, with Tuahu carrying the lantern which was an indispensable part of such an expedition, we started up the Vaiiti road.

Ahead of us and behind us other lanterns twinkled. Pauoto joined us when we passed his house, and of course there was the inevitable question as to whether we were going to the cinema. Tomi replied in the affirmative. The Chinaman's shop was closed, but from Solomon's yard came an alarming cacophony of exhaust noises, by which we knew that he had resolved the carburetor-magneto-piston-ring matter successfully.

Then, presently, Tomi's and Terii's spirits overflowed, and they sang:—

Mama iti ei, Pap iti ei!
Hau mai te moni,
Haere ana vau
I te cinema.
Ore moni, ore navenave,
Aue atu ei!

(Little Mama, little Papa!
Give me some money,
So that I may go

To the cinema.
Without money, there's no pleasure,
Alas, alas!
Alas, no happiness for me!)

And so, singing and laughing, we came to the cinema palace.

Le Palais des Beaux-Arts Cinematographique

Vaiiti! Vaiiti! How gracefully you could enter into your merrymaking! The laughter in your voices, the gardenia blossoms in your hair, the bright colors of your dresses, all seemed replete with your spirit of festival! You played like children, and you wept like children; and one only needed to abandon himself to laughter, and to tears, for you to accept him unreservedly!

Tonight many lanterns twinkled in the breadfruit grove before Le Palais des Beaux-Arts Cinematographique, glossing the great fluted leaves overhead and the carpet of grass under our feet. Beyond the groves, the Palais, stark and weather-worn in the half-light, fitted perfectly against the background of starlit sky, mountains, and shadows.

The Vaiitians were all there. Atua the chief and Abraham the preacher, both dressed in the black that befitted their dignity, stood by the roadside, talking in the slow and measured intonation suitable for the occasion. Beyond them moved our neighbors, as well as many people from the adjacent districts, passing here and there, from the Chinaman's Wheel of Fortune to the cinema house and the road, gossiping, laughing, singing. And oh! what an extravagance of color—of bright reds and yellow and orange, gratifying in a land of blue sea and sky and green islet. The girls moved gracefully in their well-cut dresses; the elderly ladies were charming bundled up in old-fashioned gowns trimmed with fathoms of lace and ribbon; but the boys seemed self-conscious rigged out in starched white trousers, and shirts which made my blue silk one appear modest.

Under a great breadfruit tree sat Mrs. Pauoto, all fuzzy with lace and ruffles, her great basin of frying-pan bread on a box before her, for it appeared that Pauoto had been unsuccessful with Ah Jong. Next to her was big Nui-woman, a little table before her on which were laid a score of strings of island chestnuts. Then there was Faiipo-woman, with a row of watermelons, some of them cut and laid out for sale; and old Oura-woman with little bamboos of maniota poe; and a pretty girl with wreaths of gardenia and frangipani and pandanus nuts and sweet-smelling miro, and such things.

Tuahu's son Faatomo stood at one side of the Palais, in front of him the great ice-cream grinder, to his left a carton of cones, to his right a small case of ice. A dozen of the flashiest of the native boys were taking turns at the ice-cream grinder; and as I watched them it occurred to me that the principle of ice-cream making at Vaiti was that the amount of ice required decreased as the inverse square of the speed of the revolutions.

"Faster! Faster!" Faatomo would shout imperiously. "Too slow, Rouru! Take your turn, Taaro! Make it buzz! Whirl it round! Faster, fellow, faster!" And one of the flashily dressed youths would jump to the wheel and spin it so rapidly that one could almost see the sparks fly. Then, after a long period, Faatomo would dig in the ice box, remove one small cube of ice about the size of a turkey egg, and drop it into the ice-cream machine, where it would splash in mildly cool water.

"Faster! Faster!" Faatomo would shout again; and, as a half-dozen of the village urchins cheered him on, the ice-cream grinder would spin the wheel at a terrific rate.

"Don't you think it's cold now, Faatomo?" Tomi asked presently, licking his lips.

"Patience, my child, patience," Faatomo replied in a bumptious tone, full of his importance; then, turning to me: "It is because of these fellows," he said, waving a hand toward his assistants. "If they would only turn the machine fast enough the ice cream would freeze."

"Why don't you fill it with ice?" I asked asininely.

"That would do little good," Faatomo explained. "Ice there must be, no doubt; but at five sous a kilo it takes very little to freeze the ice cream. It is speed that I need—speed to freeze the ice cream!"

Just then we were startled by a hideous din from somewhere down the road: "Bang-paf-paf-bang! Bang-paf-paf-bang! Bang-paf-paf-bang!" The volume of noise increased as Solomon's lightning wagon sped up the road toward the cinema common. We all hurried to the edge of the breadfruit grove to watch the car approach. First we saw a single headlight flickering far down the road; then we heard a variation in the exhaust explosions, a "Bang-bang-bang-bang!" Then the headlight would flash grandly, lighting the road a good fifty feet ahead; but the next instant the "bangs" would be followed by a series of "pafs," when the light would dim until it was almost lost.

Terii was beside me. She gripped my arm with tense little fingers. I knew that she was concerned with the same thought as I, as all the neighbors: "Will he make it?" It was like watching a circus strong man. One feels his muscles tighten as the strong man lifts with one hand the grand piano. The man staggers and the piano sways! The onlooker becomes rigid with suspense; then the grand piano is heaved above the strong man's head, and with a sign of relief the onlooker sinks back in his seat—he would have felt the same relief had the piano crashed to the floor.

"Bang-paf-paf-paf! Bang-paf-paf-paf! Paf-paf-paf-paf! Paf-paf—paf—paf—Bang!"

"Ai-ya! That last explosion saved him!"

"Bang-paf-paf-paf! Paf-paf—paf—paf! Paf—paf-paf—paf——!" The lights go out. Silence; and presently Solomon, his eyes shifting, comes walking up the road.

"Iaorana, Solomon!" Pauoto shouts. "Where is your lightning wagon?"

"I left it down the road by Faiipo's house," Solomon lies shamelessly. "I didn't want to bring it here ... the children, you know ... they would play with the machinery ... perhaps disturb some fine adjustment of the thingumajig."

(Late that night, Tuahu told me, Boulgasse proudly hauled the lightning wagon home.)

"Halay mai! Halay mai! Hamani palay!" old Ah Jong sang out from the Wheel of Fortune booth. "Come here! Come here! Make play!"

So we all hurried through the breadfruit grove to where the village Chinaman had set up a deal-pine counter, and behind it had nailed his Wheel of Fortune to a tree trunk. A gasoline pump-up lantern threw a flaring light over the place. Behind the counter, on a row of packing cases, Ah Jong displayed his prizes, consisting of packages of Rosette cigarettes, bars of soap, wreaths, candy, figure-of-eight doughnuts, and such things.

The Wheel of Fortune was marked round its circumference with numbers from one to one hundred, so, the tickets being fifty centimes each, the Chinaman would collect fifty francs for a single turn of the wheel. As the prizes were not worth ten francs, Ah Jong lost nothing by his gambling venture. However, to-night was a time of festival. We cared little if Ah Jong cheated us. Good for him, poor old Chinaman! When he called again: "Halay mai! Hamani palay!" we all crowded up to the counter to buy from one to ten tickets each, depending on our resources. Being a child of Tuahu,

I had to buy ten, but they were divided between Tomi, Terii, and myself. Even Solomon bought a ticket, though he hesitated some time and parted with his money grudgingly.

“Hamani palay!” singsonged old Ah Jong. “Make turn around! Ai-ya!” and the Wheel of Fortune whirled on its nail.

“Ai-ya! He stop number ten! Who catch number ten?”

“I got it!” yelled Solomon, elbowing up to the counter with his ticket.

Ah Jong handed him the first prize, a packet of Rosette cigarettes. Solomon thrust them hurriedly into his pocket and started to leave.

“Open it up!” shouted Pauoto. “Let’s all have a smoke!” But Solomon only glared at him and, quickening his pace, disappeared behind the cinema house.

“No play again?” Ah Jong grumbled. “No good one play, stop! Too much money throw away for me!” Then he turned the wheel for the second prize, and Tomi won it—a bar of soap!

I thought Tomi would cry when Ah Jong handed him the bar of cheap laundry soap. So, leaving Terii in the gambling hell, and unconcerned as to what Ah Jong would think of me, I took Tomi by the arm and led him away.

“Now, Tomi,” said I, “a bar of soap has many uses. You can whittle statuary from it, use it for shaving, puttying cracks in the dining-room table, popgun bullets, or as a medium of exchange. Let’s try the latter. There’s Pauoto-woman with some frying-pan bread. Maybe she’ll trade a cake for a piece of this soap.”

Tomi brightened up at this. He swaggered up to his aunt, and, “How much for one of your old cakes, Pauoto-woman?” he cried, entering into the spirit of the thing at once; and when he had made a satisfactory barter he turned to Nui-woman to trade for a string of mape nuts, to Faiipo-woman for a slice of watermelon, and to Oura-woman for a bamboo of poe.

I also made purchases, ending up at the ice-cream grinder, where I bought cones full of sweetened and slightly cooled milk. Then, after giving Tomi a few francs for gambling purposes, I told him to join Terii, and made my way to Tuahu, who was standing before the cinema palace, talking with the chief.

“I have thought of this many times,” Tuahu was saying as I came up, “and it is my opinion that the cinema lies.”

“Perhaps so,” Atua replied gravely; “but what I see with my own eyes I believe. For instance: I have an enlarged photograph of my mother, in a gilt

frame. You yourself have seen it hanging in my house and have noticed how beautifully it has been retouched with red and blue paint. This photograph speaks truth, for it is the exact likeness of my mother, though I must admit that my mother never held red roses between her lips—but that is only a detail. Now, are not these pictures that I see in the cinema also photographs, and if the picture of my mother is the truth,—or nearly the truth,—why should not these cinema pictures be the truth? Moreover, I have actually seen, in the Papeete cinema, a picture of Tahiti, with the schooner Tamaraii Tahiti sailing along the reef, and the clouds gathering above Orofena. I myself have sailed on the Tamaraii Tahiti and we have all seen the clouds gather above Orofena, so I know that the cinema speaks the truth.”

“Nevertheless, Atua,” Tuahu said, weighing each word and speaking in measured periods, “though the cinema may not lie in all things, it does so in many. At one time I saw a picture where a bad man had wandered into a treeless land of sand. Monsieur Poroï told us that he was dying of thirst. Presently he fell to the ground; and then, through some magic which I do not understand, he was suddenly transported to a great house where men were feasting on roast pig and drinking bottles of wine. He joined the diners to eat hugely; then, instead of staying in the house of plenty, he suddenly returned to the barren land, where he died. When I saw this picture, Atua, my friend, I knew that the cinema lied. No man would have returned to that desolate place after having feasted in the grand house... . But here is my son, who can tell us.” Tuahu straightened up, made a fine gesture, and concluded: “I must tell you, Atua, that Ropati and William Cowboy are as brothers nursed at the same breast... . He will explain this matter.”

“First of all, Tuahu,” I replied, “I must say that William Cowboy and I are not as brothers nursed at the same breast. I knew him years ago, but he has forgotten me, for I was only one of many who worked for him in the pictures. And concerning the cinema: a part of it is truth and a part of it lies.”

“There!” exclaimed both Tuahu and Atua at once; then Tuahu said, delicately: “As to what Ropati says about William Cowboy, you must understand that it is only because of his great modesty. I know that they are great friends.” And to me: “Ropati, what was that you said about working for William Cowboy?”

Just then there was a bang as the ticket-booth window was thrown open. A beam of light shot past us, and instantly afterward the long cadaverous head of the village schoolmaster was thrust through the opening. He placed a cornet to his lips, filled his lungs, and sounded a fanfare that galvanized the crowd in the breadfruit grove. It was his customary way of announcing the ticket sale.

I sprang to the window at once so that Tuahu would not get there before me and squander his few francs. Laying a hundred-franc note on the counter, I asked for five tickets.

Taaroa, the schoolmaster, and tonight the ticket vender, brushed my money aside. A tall lanky man of fifty, reminding one of the immortal Ichabod Crane he was a person of great importance in Vaiiti. He taught school at times, acted as interpreter for the French officials during their rare visits, and was the local notary, which meant that he attended to the mail, registered births and deaths and marriages, and collected the road tax. Also, he was famed for his skill on the piston, as he called his cornet.

“Well, well, Ropati,” he greeted me, stretching out a long bony arm and grasping my hand in his. “Where are you from and where are you going?... . To the cinema? Ah, yes; there is to be a cinema tonight. Certainly! A great picture, so I hear! William Cowboy in The King of Clubs. yes, yes, The Jack of Diamonds, ha ha! And what, Ropati, is the news from your end of the district?”

By this time the rest of the villagers had lines up and were waiting for their turn, so I thought it no more than polite to buy my tickets at once and give the others a chance.

“No news, Taaroa,” I replied; “but let me have my tickets. The others are waiting.”

“Tut, tut, my boy, the night is young,” he replied. “There will be plenty of time to attend to monetary matters... . Have you heard the latest news from Papeete? No? Well, well, come round to the little door at your left and we will have a glass of wine while I tell you about the grand funeral of Monsieur Potier. A most spectacular affair, Ropati, a most spectacular affair... .”

Again I pushed my hundred-franc note toward him. This time he picked it up gingerly between his thumb and index finger, held it out at arm’s length, for he was farsighted, wrinkled his bushy eyebrows, and exclaimed; “Ah! A hundred francs. It is one of those new notes that the Banque de

L'Indo-Chine has been issuing since the franc fell so low... . What is your opinion about international exchange, Ropati? Will the franc return to par?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Taaroa... . How about those tickets?"

"Ah, yes; the tickets, of course... . But I cannot change this great note. I will have to send it to the village Chinaman ... and while we are waiting for the change just come into the booth and join me in a glass of wine. It is some of Mauu's Baronsac! Exquisite bouquet! Come right in, Ropati, come right in!"

I excused myself, adding that I would go for the change myself, which I did, taking the tickets with me, for Taaroa would not think of letting me leave until he had demonstrated his complete confidence in my integrity to the extent of short credit for five tickets. As I turned away and Atua took my place I heard the schoolmaster cry: "Well, well, it is Atua! Where are you from and where are you going, etc., etc." No doubt the ticket sale would be a prolonged business, and Taaroa would have no trouble in finding another of the neighbors to discuss with him the bottle of Baronsac.

By playing another round at the Wheel of Fortune I soon had the change, and Terii had a package of Rosette cigarettes, which she handed gracefully to me—not because she did not smoke herself but because there were no pockets in her gown. Then we stocked up with frying-pan bread, figure-of-eight doughnuts, strings of mape nuts, bamboos of poe, slices of watermelon, cones of ice cream, a half-dozen bags of peanuts from the Chinaman, and many gorgeous flower wreaths which we wore round our necks and like tiaras round our heads. Thus we proceeded to Taaroa, whom we paid; then picked up Tuahu and Mama-Reretu, and swaggered to the main entrance of Le Palais des Beaux-Arts Cinematographique.

The Barroom Scene

We entered the cinema garlanded in many wreaths, Tuahu, Terii, and I smoking Rosette cigarettes in bamboo holders, Tomi munching peanuts, his fingers greasy with frying-pan bread and figure-of-eight doughnuts, and bristling with strings of mape nuts, bamboos of poe and such things. Mama-Reretu trailed behind, smiling just a trifle severely, as was seemly for a woman of her years, but having the time of her life nevertheless.

Monsieur Poroï in person took our tickets at the door. The world-champion interpreter, a French-Tahitian of fifty, was a character of importance and popularity throughout the islands. I believe that he knew every soul in Tahiti by name, as well as numerous details concerning their lives, public and private. This knowledge gave him great advantage as a cinema interpreter. He had the appearance of a true showman. Though he wore no fancy vest, gold watch chain, or silk hat, still his genial expression, his ample girth, and his general bearing were precisely those of a high-grade spieler for a side show. He talked grandiloquently, used comprehensive gestures, and knew the value of the dramatic pause. When speaking of a sensational scene in one of his films, he would stop at just the right instant, roll his eyes, and hold out his hand for silence, as though we should listen for the roar of William Cowboy's guns or the scream of the trapped heroine. Then, after exactly the right interval, he would galvanize his listeners with a terse, stirring sentence, as: "Like lightning he whirled round, and, just as the heroine fell fainting to the floor, shot the villain through the heart!" Then he would relax, his mouth would fall open, his eyes sink back into their sockets, and he would make a clucking noise with his tongue on the roof of his mouth!

"Aha! A great night for you, Ropati," he said, blinking meaningfully when I had handed him the tickets. "Who would have thought it! Here in our midst! In the vale of Vaiti! Living in peaceful harmony with the simple natives! A man who has stood at the bar with William Cowboy! Ah! This will be a stirring night for your charming neighbors. I shall make the most of it in my interpretations!"

“Monsieur Poroi!” I whispered, not a little agitated. “Please say nothing. I’ll give you a demijohn of wine if you say nothing!”

The interpreter clicked his tongue on the roof of his mouth. “Creditable modesty,” he murmured. “I shall consider the matter ... but you will be recognized, particularly in that spectacular scene where you turn, thus—” here he went through the motions with a great show of precision—“and you hold up your glass, thus—and toss off the whiskey, thus—and put your hand to your six-shooter, thus—Ah! Superb acting! Sensational! All Papeete is talking about it! You make the scene! An inimitable interpretation of the outlaw of the untamed West!”

I repeated the offer of the demijohn, thanked him for his appreciation of my talent, and joined Tuahu and the others, who had taken their seats of the projector platform, with a few other of the local dignitaries. There were Atua and Abraham, a number of deacons, Policeman Mutoi, Tefa the road boss, and the chief of the adjoining district of Mataeia. Terii and I had a front bench to ourselves, for Tomi had gone to join the youngsters who sat cross-legged on the floor within a yard of the screen, Tuahu and Reretu sat behind me, and Taaroa joined them when he had finished gossiping with the last Vaiitian, and selling him a ticket.

When Taaroa arrived he started things moving at once with his piston. A preliminary flourish, a sputtering noise as he blew the moisture out of his instrument, an adjustment of some gadget or other, and he was playing in earnest, his foot stamping out a bass-drum accompaniment, his cheeks puffed, his eyes bulging slightly, for all the world like a cornetist in a third-rate road show.

Faa nave-nave maitai i to reo iti ei,

He played the first verse of a Vaiiti song; then repeated it while the fifty or more children in the front of the theatre sang at the top of their voices:

“Faa nave-nave maitai i to reo iti ei
Mei te oto o te vivo ei!
No te au
Te Papa iti ei!
No te au
Te Mama iti ei!

No te au
Tatou pau-roa ei!”

(Your voice is as sweet to me
As the mellow notes of the flute!
There’s none better on earth
Than my little Papa!
There’s none better on earth
Than my little Mama!
There’s none better on earth
Than Papa, Mama, and me!)

Then Tomi, the precocious one, jumped to his feet, did an extemporaneous dance, and, with the audience laughing and egging him on, he sang:

Orare, orare!
Um tse tse! um tse tse! Um tse tse tse!
E pae pene te tui
Um tse tse! Um tse tse! Um tse tse tse!
Napoleon te e-ho-o!
Um tse tse! Um tse tse! Um tse tse tse!

Which is literally translated:—

(Mackerel! Mackerel!
Um tse tse! Um tse tse! Um tse tse tse!
For five sous you get a string!
Um tse tse! Um tse tse! Um tse tse tse!
Napoleon is selling them!
Um tse tse! Um tse tse! Um tse tse tse!)

Tomi accompanied the “Um tse tse!” refrain with a shameless movement of the knees and hips. Everybody roared with laughter, and then, suddenly, silence!

There was a sputtering noise from the projector as a beam of light was played on the screen. Then sounded the oratorical voice of Monsieur Poroi:

“People of Vaiiti! Attention! I am about to present to you that bloodcurdling, hair-raising, heart-rending, side-tickling masterpiece of all spectacles... . Attention! I will name it! William Cowboy ... the one and only William Cowboy ... in the superfilm of all time ... The Jack of Diamonds! Hold tight to your seats, gentlemen! Get out your handkerchiefs, ladies! Are you ready?”

He turned, his arm upraised, hesitated an instant, and then, “Turn the crank, Alexander!” he cried. There was a noise from the projector like a junior lightning wagon, screams from the children! The Jack of Diamonds was thrown on the screen!

At first I could make nothing of it. It seemed that a great downpour of rain had been filmed, and I could remember no such scene in The Jack of Diamonds. Then white light again, and a casual word from Monsieur Poroi to the effect that the film had broken owing to the intensity of the action. But soon it was going again, upside down this time; then it was righted, and little by little, through imagination or because the film improved, I began to make out shadowy figures moving across the screen. They grew more distinct, and by the time the second reel was being shown I could almost follow the entire action.

Monsieur Poroi kept up a running fire of comment. It was by far the best part of the entertainment, both for my neighbors and for myself. “Ai-ya!” he would exclaim. “There’s the bad man playing marbles in a big bow! with William Cowboy! Look out for the fierce fellow with long whiskers, ladies and gentlemen. He will take a shot at William in the last reel; but William will fling him over a precipice and end his evil life!”

“I hope they give him a decent funeral,” I heard Mama-Reretu mutter behind me.

“There goes William now! Whoops! His horse is bucking; but he doesn’t care! Right through the barroom and out by the window he rides! Hey! Nui-woman, how’d you like to have a man like William Cowboy to bring your fei down from the mountains?”

“Mamu! Ta’ata maamaa!” Nui-woman screamed. (Shut up, you crazy fellow!)

“Get ready to weep, Pauoto-woman! There’s a terrible scene coming. The poor daughter of the honest bartender is about to be carried off by the long-whiskered villain! Here he comes! Look at the evil glint in his eyes!

The hound! See his oily smile as he talks with the honest bartender and sends him on a fool's errand! Now he's got the girl in his lustful arms! His eyes gleam avidly! The cur! The rascal! Ai-ya! Hold everything! He's carrying her away! ... But here comes William Cowboy with his bold riders! They see the long-whiskered villain! They are after him! Whoops! Crash! Bang! They are shooting! Look at William shooting both his guns at once! There they go! Ai-ya! Ai-ya! Ai-ya! Saved at last!"

Then came the barroom scene. I saw the boys lined up, each with a foot on the rail: Cuffs and James and Buttons and Skeeter Bill—all of them, myself among them. To me it was a painful experience to go back ten years and see myself. A "still" photograph might not have been so distressing; but it was peculiarly troubling to see myself moving, grinning, tossing off glasses of colored water, patting Cuffs on the back and listening open-mouthed to the yarn James was telling! One must see one's self, in a very minor part in a picture, to realize, painfully, what one appears to others.

As I watched I remembered how I had been living in a fool's paradise, lulled into a vacant state of bliss by the clicking of the cameras, fully believing that I was a moving-picture actor, that thousands would note me, mayhap comment on the promising young actor who had stood at the bar—the lad in white chaps!

Gradually I became conscious of a murmur from the audience, which rose rapidly to a roar of applause. Terii clutched my arm, leaned close, and whispered: "Ropati, it is you! Oh-h-h!"

"It is my son, Ropati!" came huskily from Tuahu, in a tone that he may have meant to control but that came blurting out startlingly loud. Then Poroi, realizing that he had lost the demijohn of wine, through no fault of his own, decided to make the best of things. He shouted:

"There he is! Ropati tane! Bosom friend of William Cowboy! Watch him toss off that whiskey, Terii! That's the kind of man to have! Ai-ya! Another one! He'll drink fourteen before the picture is over, and it won't feeze him!"

Then Monsieur Poroi had an inspiration. "If you'd only seen that part of the picture that was lost—stolen!" he cried. "The part where Ropati leaves the bar, slaps William Cowboy on the back, kicks the bad man, and kisses the heroine! Ah! That was a sensational scene! Spectacular! But it was stolen by my unprincipled competitor, the fellow Tioti. He's showing it in

Papeete every night to crowded theatres! ... Look out! There's Ropati tane tossing off another whiskey! Bur-r-r! It doesn't even gag him!"

The scene ended with that last whiskey (and, incidentally, William S. Hart's fight with the faro dealer). As I rose unsteadily to slip out of the theatre, the thought kept going through my head: "If I had only left the bar to shake hands with Hart! Or stood on my head. Or done any of those things that Poroï said I had done. Tuahu must be terribly disappointed!" I felt that I had exhibited myself to poor advantage ... but the neighbors felt otherwise, and throughout my stay at Vaiiti, when I was introduced to a man from another district, it was as: "Ropati, the friend of William Cowboy!"

I did not have more than an hour to wait at Tuahu's place before he came home with his family. Then the native oven was opened, we had supper, and repaired to Tuahu's house, where old Toto had been awaiting our return. First we made ourselves comfortable, changing our holiday clothes for pareus; then Tuahu, sitting across the mat from Toto, said:

"Now, Toto, my relative, I will tell you in detail about the cinema," and he started to recount with great detail the walk to the Palais, the Wheel of Fortune, the soap Tomi had won, everything.

When he had described the last scene he fell silent; then Toto sighed, and muttered: "Ah, so it was a bad cinema after all ... even though Ropati was in it."

"It was not a very bad cinema, my relative," Tuahu said diffidently. "But strange things happened in it which I cannot explain ... unless it is because the cinema is lying talk. Now, the bad man, as I said, was thrown over a cliff and killed, and yet he was not buried. Who knows what happened to the poor man's body? We children of Tahiti would not treat even a bad man like that. We would bury him with the proper religious ceremony; there would be flowers, and some of us would weep as a matter of respect for the dead."

"Yes," Toto mumbled, "and that sinful ending! Here are the white missionaries telling us we must not live with our wives unless we marry them in church, and yet William Cowboy was not married! Tell me that part again, Tuahu."

Tuahu did so, adding: "Yes, my relative, it was like that: William Cowboy kissed his sweetheart very much; then he took her behind him on his horse and rode off; and as he rode over the plains it became dark very quickly, as though even the sun were covering her face with shame! Yes;

they just rode off, and that was all! No marriage license, no church ceremony, no flowers, no bridesmaids, no wedding ring or wedding feast!”

They were silent for a little; then Tuahu burst out: “But I am sure the villain was buried and William married his sweetheart! The picture lied, that is all... Ropati, explain more carefully about this: is the cinema true talk or lying talk?”

“It is mostly lying talk, Tuahu.”

Tuahu wagged his head thoughtfully. “Ropati, of course I know that you are truthful,” he said, the diffident note returning; “but the people of your country ... sometimes they tell terrible lies.”

“Yes, Tuahu.” Then, suddenly aware that it was the first of April, I said: “We even have a Lying Day.”

“What is that, Ropati?” Mama-Reretu broke in, looking at me closely.

“Why, Mama-Reretu, we call the first of April ‘April Fools’ Day’—Lying Day—Mahana havare. On this day anyone can lie as much as he pleases and not be sinning.”

Mama-Reretu knitted her brows. “They can lie as much as they please and still not sin?” she asked.

“Yes, Mama,” I replied; “but it is only in fun.” Then my attention was turned to Tuahu, who had cleared his throat and, addressing Toto, was saying:

“Now, Toto, my relative, as there is still more than an hour till dawn, I will again tell you in detail about the cinema.”

A few moments later I nodded to Terii, and together we walked down the dew-damp trail to our house on the beach. Old Bill was just rousing his lusty companions as we climbed up the verandah steps.

The Crime of Mama-Reretu

On the third of April—the date is significant—I went to Tuahu’s house. As I passed the cookhouse, I saw Mutoi, the policeman, in gold-braided cap and brass-buttoned coat, leaving by the front doorway; and I heard him say:

“Remember, Tuahu, you are to take Reretu to court on Saturday after next! The charge is very serious. I should incarcerate her in the Taravao ‘iron house,’ but I am trusting in your promise that she will not escape.... Ai-ya! Aue-ue! Who would have thought that she would turn to a life of crime! She may serve many years in the ‘iron house’—perhaps be sent to the penal colony at New Caledonia!”

Then he shrugged his shoulders with great satisfaction and strode up the road, there, no doubt, to plant the seeds of gossip in the fertile ears of Nui-woman.

Mama-Reretu go to prison! To New Caledonia! Of what hideous crime could the dear little lady have been guilty? I was dumbfounded. Of course the policeman had exaggerated; that was only to be expected; but taking even the safe margin of 10 per cent veracity, still the case was serious. There had been no smile on Mutoi’s lips, I recalled, and Tuahu’s face had been drawn and troubled.

When I entered the room I found Mama-Reretu crouched in a corner, a little bundle of black muslin, weeping her eyes out. Even Tuahu’s eyes were moist, while little Tomi wore a very sober face for such an irresponsible youngster.

Even before I had noticed Reretu—for her dark dress united with the shadows—I was surprised by all the finery in the room. Ordinarily Tuahu’s house was a poverty-stricken place with little to recommend it save its spotlessness; but on this day a brand-new sewing machine glistened close to the doorway, there was a camphorwood chest with shiny brasswork and a carved top, and, I knew, a musical lock, while here and there were such articles of value as a large mirror in a gilt frame, an octagon clock, and an expensive Chinese silk shawl, beautifully embroidered.

Of course I surmised a connection between this display of wealth and Mama-Reretu’s summons to court. Could she have stolen these things?

Impossible! I approached her, and sitting close to her on the mat I asked her to tell me all about it.

At first she sobbed only a few broken phrases. The sewing machine was for her daughter-in-law, Faatomo's wife... . "I didn't know it was wrong," she wept. "You yourself told me it wasn't sinning... . And I meant the octagon clock for you—it would look so nice on your bamboo wall. The chest was for Pauoto... ."

She was giving damning evidence against herself! It seemed brutal to ask her outright if she had stolen these things, but I did so.

Immediately Reretu sat up, dried her eyes, and spoke sharply to me: "Stolen them? I steal, my son?" I thought she was about to cry again, but she was too angry with me for that. "You should know better," she scolded. "I merely went to the Chinaman's shop and bought them on credit!"

"But Mama-Reretu—you must have known that you could not pay for them."

"Certainly I knew," she replied.

"Then why did you do such a thing? It is the same as stealing."

"It is your own fault, Ropati," she declared. "You told me about Lying Day and I believed you."

Though I began to understand, I asked her to explain more fully.

"You told me," she went on, "that the first of April is Lying Day in your country, and that all the people pass the day lying to each other, and that it is not considered a sin on that day. We children of Tahiti have heard of that day too, but we never paid much attention to it. But when you reminded me of it I thought I would have a little fun, so I went to the village Chinaman and told him I wanted a sewing machine."

"Yes, Mama-Reretu; and he was foolish enough to give it to you?"

"Not at first. He asked me where I should get the money to pay for the machine; and remembering all you told me about Lying Day, I said that Tuahu had just sold a big tract of his land and would soon have thousands of francs. And I said one of my relatives had just returned from Fakarava with the biggest pearl ever found in a parau shell. Ah Jong believed me, for you see he had never heard of Lying Day."

Mama-Reretu caught her breath in a little twinge of emotion. She wiped her eyes and went on: "Then I told him I wanted an octagon clock with a pendulum and colored flowers painted on its face; and a chest with a musical lock; and a silk shawl; and a big mirror with a gilt frame. The

foolish Chinaman was glad to give me them all, and he even made me a 'thank-you gift' of a package of tobacco and a box of matches.

"I laughed when my brother, Pauoto, came and brought all the things away; and all the neighbors along the road shouted with surprise. I thought Lying Day a wonderful thing!"

She began to weep again then. I turned to ask Tuahu, as gently as I could, if Reretu had mentioned my name to the Chinaman.

The gentle old man lowered his head in confusion. "Yes, Ropati," he replied. "She told the Chinaman that you were her son, and that you would pay for all if no one else did." Then quickly, in an agitated tone: "But she did not mean it, Ropati; it was only because of what you had said about Lying Day."

There was one thing I could not understand. "Why does not the Chinaman take these things back?" I asked.

At that Tuahu's eyes lighted with anger. "I have asked him to," he explained; "but he says that they have been bought, and are now damaged, and that he will have his money."

"He knows Reretu cannot pay."

"You are wrong, Ropati, for Reretu can pay," Tuahu replied. "You see, it is this way with the Tinito: he does not want our money, nor does he want to send Reretu to jail, as the foolish policeman said. He wants our land, Ropati! Ah! We children of Tahiti are losing our coconut and our breadfruit groves, one by one. We foolish people buy from the Chinaman, and when we cannot pay he takes us to court and demands a part of our land. Two of my best coconut groves have already gone to this Ah Jong, and now he will take the most of what I have left!"

It was only too true. How often had I stood on the road of a morning to watch Ah La's cart go by, and seen my neighbors buying things recklessly, never heeding that the time would come to pay. Irresponsible improvident children! Of course some of them did pay, from their copra money, or what they had made from a fei expedition, or a successful day with the fish nets; but many of them could never hope to settle their slowly mounting accounts. Along the road of a morning it was always the same cry of "Tarahu!" (credit), the same leering smile from the obliging Chinaman; and the Vaiiti neighbors returned to their homes to eat and smoke and wait, unmindful of the day of reckoning.

This may be difficult to understand until one remembers that the Tahitians, for centuries, had lived in abundance on an island where famine, cold, drought, flood, were unknown, and where there was no incentive for a man to hoard more than he actually needed for his own sustenance. This happy condition begat an improvident people who were ill fitted to cope with the grasping methods of foreigners.

In the present case something had to be done at once. Tuahu and I discussed it for some time, finally to perfect a counter-offensive campaign, *a guerre a mort*.

First we closed the doors and locked them, for several of the neighbors had gathered to feast their curiosity under the pretense of consoling Mama-Reretu. Then we wadded a few little pieces of paper and jammed them into the lock of the chest until, strain as we might, we could not lock it. Next we removed a small gadget from the clock, effectively ruining it as a timepiece; and finally we removed from the sewing machine the thumbscrew that held the needle in place, and flagrantly threw it out of the window into a clump of ferns.

“Now,” said I, “there will be something new to gossip about tomorrow morning on the road; and Ah La will ‘have salt water in his eyes’ when he comes along in the bread wagon! We will take these things to the Chinaman’s shop, Tuahu; but we will leave the mirror and the shawl, for I have wanted to make Mama-Reretu a present for a long time.”

I unlocked and opened the door. “Pauoto!” I called to Tuahu’s brother-in-law, who was among the curious ones, “put that sewing machine on your big back and carry it to Ah Jong’s shop; Tuahu and I will follow with the chest and octagon clock.”

So we went up the path and walked down the road to the Chinaman’s place; and by the time we had reached it, nearly all the Vaiiti neighbors were following us.

Ah Jong was furious when he saw us approaching. When we were still many yards up the road he ran from his shop to wave his hands for us to turn back, sputtering in outrageous Tahitian that we could not bring the things back, that they had been fairly bought, that he would have his pound of flesh.

We paid him no attention. When Ah La joined him and they tried to block the door, we pushed them aside; and then, because Tuahu was too mild-tempered for such work, I took the floor.

“What do you mean, Chinaman, by selling Reretu this trash?” I cried, holding out the clock at arm’s length and shaking it before him. “I shall have you taken to court! I shall have your license taken away! Look at this worthless chest! This morning Reretu asked me to lock the thing, and try as I might I could not turn the key! You have cheated her! I shall report you to the police! And look at the clock; and see if you can make it run! I have been trying for hours but it will not tick a single time! Tinito, when the natives hear of this they will buy no more from your store... . The sewing machine, you say. That is not a sewing machine. The cleverest man in the world could not sew a stitch on it. When Reretu tried to mend her gown this morning she found that there was no screw to hold the needle in place! What have you done, bought a broken secondhand machine, varnished and tried to sell it to my friend? You may cheat these people, Tinito, but you will not cheat me. Did I not tell Reretu that I would pay for all she bought? Will I pay for old broken worthless trash?”

I then shouted: “There is your junk, Tinito! Have you anything to say?”

He had nothing to say. I paid him then for the mirror and the shawl, and Tuahu and I went back down the road, followed by a strangely silent crowd. At first I wondered what was the matter: had I not acted commendably; had I not been a kind of hero? I expected more of the spirit of approbation, of rejoicing that the common enemy for once had been foiled. But I did not know my neighbors as well as I believed I did. Presently Tuahu heaved a sigh; then muttered in a tone of pain:

“Aue atu ei! Te Tinito i te arofa!” (Alas! The poor Chinaman!)

“Damn the Chinaman!” I growled; but I was alone with my sentiment.

From that day on, I believe, Tuahu modified his opinions about me. I was still a child of Tahiti, and he loved me as sincerely as though I were his own flesh and blood; but still I was a stern and bowelless fellow; the kind of man who would drink strong liquor in William Cowboy’s saloon, or who would break the heart of a poor old Chinaman.

Steamer Day

A few days after the Mama-Reretu affair I rose early, tied up a clean white suit in a pareu, and took the sack wagon to Papeete. It was a Friday before steamer day, the American mail would be in and sorted before noon on Saturday, and there was business to attend to in town. Also, I wished to talk with Mauu about the technique of buying land, for he knew all there was to know about that complicated business.

That night, as we sat at the long table sipping the famous vin ordinaire Baronsac, I told Mauu my troubles, explaining how Tuahu and Mama-Reretu had nearly lost a big tract of their land, and how I wished to buy the property adjoining mine. Then I could afford a home for Tuahu and his family when they had involved themselves inextricably with Ah Jong or some other Chinaman.

"So long as the Chinamen are bound to own most of Tahiti in a short time," I said, "I may as well buy while there is yet land available."

"Sure t'ing," Mauu agreed. "You buy plenty... Now, I got one little piece out in Papara, nice beach, nice little house, all the same paradise..."

"I'm sorry, Mauu," I broke in, "but I am not interested in Papara land. What I want is the strip next to mine, called Vaimoe. How do I go about buying it?"

"Well, I t'ink you find out all the fellers' names that own it first t'ing."

"That should be easy."

"Maybe yes, maybe no. You know one?"

"I know several: there's Paetahua, who lives near me, and Terii-woman of Mataeia, and Manea of Hitiaa."

"Wait a minute, you start all wrong already." Mauu paused to finish his glass of wine. He glanced at me with a twinkle of amusement in his eyes; then asked: "You know my name?"

"Certainly—Mau."

"Oh yes!" Then Mauu explained to me the complex nomenclature of a Tahitian, his own many names exemplifying the case.

(1) When Mauu was born he was given the name of Teio a Ruaroo. This was his official name throughout life, though scarcely a soul in Tahiti,

saving himself, was aware of it. None of his many relatives, I believe, had ever heard of a person called Teio a Ruaroo, and he himself had to con the matter over before he recalled it.

(2) The first confusion occurred when Mauu's mother decided that she preferred to call him Terai. It was a pretty name, she thought, while Teio a Ruaroo was the kind of name one writes in the family Bible or puts on official documents.

(3) The name of Terai, however, he retained only until his father's death, when, following the inevitable custom, he took one of that man's names—Tane, in this case.

(4) Tane stayed by him until he came to the age of eighteen and married his first wife, when she gave him the name of Tamahine. It was a wife's prerogative to name one's husband what one pleased; and anyway, there was a man named Tane in her district who had elephantiac legs, so that name would never do for her man.

(5) Mauu was known as Tamahine until his wife died, when for sentimental reasons he took her name of Turia.

(6) In the course of time, when he married again, his second wife gave him the name of Tolomono (Solomon), she being a Mormon and an admirer of the wise king.

(7) When she deserted him, he did not take her name, but returned to Turia, that of his first love, which name he retained until he married his third wife, who bestowed on him his present name of Mauu.

"So you see I got seven name," Mauu concluded. "Every feller in Tahiti all the same; some got half-dozen names; some a lot more. Some remember their first, official name; some forget a long time ago. But when you buy land you gotta know the official name. Those fellers in the Registry Office don't like pet names that maybe the third wife give you."

"Well, Mauu, after I have the names of all the owners in the land Vaimoe, then what do I do?"

Mauu blinked his eyes and grinned. "I tell you one way," he said. "You get two, t'ree, four demijohn wine, go to one man who got a little share in Vaimoe, and have one fine party. Then, when he feels too fine, you buy quick."

"That would be one way of buying one share, but Vaimoe has several owners."

“Oh yes; plenty owners; I t’ink maybe two, t’ree hundred people got little share in the land. I savvy all about him.”

“Well?”

“When you got one share you go to the Clerk of the Court, and you say: ‘I’m no satisfied with my relatives. They take all the coconuts from my little land Vaimoe. I t’ink you sell him pretty damn quick at public auction!’”

Mauu made a gesture of finality by stretching out both hands, palms upward.

“Go on,” I said.

“That’s all. The Clerk of the Court just takes the land and sells it at auction, and you buy it cheap because nobody else bids.”

“Why won’t they bid?”

“Oh, it’s just what you call ‘customary.’ If a feller bids on land you put up, then you bid on land he puts up, and that’s no good for nobody. Everybody leave every feller’s business all alone, and everybody happy.”

“I see; I’m to buy a tiny share in the land, perhaps a hundredth part, and then, being one of the land’s owners, I will have the right to auction the land off, when, being the only bidder, I will buy it for my own price.”

“That’s it exactly. You savvy everyt’ing now.”

“Well, Mauu, can you think of any other way of buying Vaimoe?”

“Oh yes; you just buy one share at a time: one from feller in Marquesas Islands, another from a feller that went to Samoa long time ago, one from guardian of little child,—and that’s plenty trouble, all right,—and so on until you get two, t’ree hundred shares. Yes; maybe, some day, when you nice old gentleman you own him all. Maybe yes; maybe no.”

“Or,” I suggested brightly, “I can get one of the owners in debt to me by selling him an octagon clock on credit; then I can seize his share to pay the debt and go through the auction business.”

Mauu scowled his disapproval. “No, you don’t do that, Ropati,” he said. “That’s all the same damned Chinaman!”

The next morning Mari, the pretty half-caste waitress, brought my coffee to my bed. The steamer was in, she said, and already the streets were alive with people from the districts, the Leeward Islands and Moorea. Also, Captain Owen’s Potii had been sighted off Venus Point!

Papeete, on steamer day, reminded one of an old-time family reunion. Old acquaintances from the districts and outlying islands, relatives in flesh

among the natives and in spirit among the Europeans, met on the Club balcony, or in Josephus's commodious bar, or in the Chinese cafes and on the hotel verandahs, to discuss the local news as well as that from the outside world, to drink and to read their mail.

"Look-a-here, Captain Harris," Watts of Raiatea might say on taking a seat opposite the Captain on the hotel verandah. "I got a letter from Penrhyn Island. It says poor old Wilson is dead. Yep; shot himself while out pig hunting. And it says Prendergast's got a new baby—girl this time."

"Good for Prendergast—he always wanted a daughter... Listen here a minute; this one's from my brother: 'How happy you must be in the palm-covered isles of the South Seas, with the old Pacific rumbling along the barrier reef and the wind sighing in the palm fronds.... Lord God A'mighty! He must of been reading O'Brien's book! All I ever seen in the islands was a lot of Chow outfits, and all I ever heard was a lot of Chow brats bawling, and all I ever smelled was the mud in the Chow pigpens!'"

"Easy there, old man; that's just because you never leave Papeete. Now, on my island ... " And so it would go, the same things they had talked about since they came to the islands, and are talking about to this day, for all I know.

Any steamer day the "Captain" could be seen standing by his yellow Ford car, his flowing beard ruffled by the breeze as, gesticulating forcibly, he told Dr. Cassiau of his year's cabbage crop, how much honey his bees were producing, of his Mission mangoes, and how he needed plenty of food on his place, for the world was going to the dogs, and all the resources of the world, one gathered, were about to dissolve in thin air. He was so sure of this, he told the doctor, that he contemplated writing a letter to the Times about it.

In Josephus's bar, traders, pearl buyers, rum runners, island skippers, sat at the white-enameled tables, thanking their stars that their wives were not permitted to follow them to this last sanctuary; ordering rum punches, wine, anisettes, mint juleps. Josephus himself served them on steamer days—unless there had been an important death, when he was occupied by his other profession. With his funny Charlie-Chaplin shuffle he moved between the tables, talking to the customers in a tone slightly lachrymose, slightly querulous.

"Ah yes, Jones," he would drawl; "you want the usual rum sec... Yes, Mr. Whitney, a mint julep, of course—another mint julep... Sad about poor

old Watson! Yes; his wife arrived on this boat—a Seventh-Day Adventist and a leading member of the Anti-Saloon League! ... Presently, McDuff, presently... Yes; Captain Owen's Potii has been sighted. She is expected to bring the corpse of the late gendarme of Hikueru... Ah me! How they die! We'll all be dead soon! Yes, Murphy, I'll bring the picon punch directly... ”

“That's all right, Josephus; we know you're the undertaker.”

“Ah yes, the undertaker! The undertaker! I've had more than fifty bodies this year already. Certainly, Whitney; I'll bring the cognac perrier instantly. Ah me! Lackaday!” And he would shuffle to the bar, slowly and methodically to mix the drinks.

Through the streets and into the shops wandered those exotic beings from a vaguely remembered world, the tourists. Each was dressed in outlandish clothes, plus fours, tweed suits, beach pajamas, even bathing suits. They carried cameras and notebooks, glanced this way and that, seemingly thrilled with the knowledge that they were in the South Seas. Papeete as a whole had no more than a casual glance to spare them; but the Chinamen, watching the odd figures pass, schemed how they could make a few francs selling them stale fruit and fake curios; and perhaps Whitney, the perfumer, darted an avid glance from his shop where he sold his rare Tahitian essences.

The water front was crowded with every type of island craft. Many of the big schooners were in from the Marquesas and the Tuamotu with their loads of copra and mother-of-pearl shell for the north-bound steamer. Half-savage natives from the Dangerous Archipelago crowded the rail, frightened to go ashore on such a day. They pointed to the fantastically dressed tourists, to the antique cars such as Solomon's lightning wagon and the Captain's cadmium-yellow Ford, to the gendarmes rigged out in their steamer-day uniforms; and, muttering curious comments, they stored up information concerning city life for the edification of their friends in the islands.

Each Saturday the Paea sportsman came round the point in his fast speedboat. Always he was full of a yarn about his latest swordfish and how he had played it for hours. Soon Alex at the Club would have to listen to it, in detail, from beginning to end; but Alex did not mind: it was a part of his business, and the sportsman was a good customer.

Now and again Walker's glass-bottomed boat glided out to the coral shoals, loaded with tourists. They appeared as a confusion of color against

the steadfast blue of the tropic sea and sky.

Little sailing craft and powerboats winged and chugged in from the districts and the outlying islands; and finally, just before eleven o'clock, the schooner Mitiaro arrived from Moorea. Her decks were always jammed with passengers until there was no more than standing room, but someone always found elbow space enough to play an accordion, and in spite of the uncomfortable journey across the channel, everybody was happy enough to sing lustily.

It was one of the big events of the day. Scores of Papeeteans crowded along the water front. There were shouts and greetings; news was screamed from passengers to shore friends before the schooner's anchor had been dropped; Moorea's hotel man, Jabez, watched the passing tourists with a calculating eye; the important chief, Teono, cried: "Iaorana Papeete!" There was laughter, a burst from the accordion, and the splash of the anchor. But more than anything else, there was always the grand sight of Captain Charlie himself, six foot four inches, aware of his importance, his head held high, his great hands on the tiller, an expression on his face which proclaimed unmistakably: "Again I have brought my ship safely across!"

At eleven o'clock the Mitiaro had tied up and the passengers were ashore; mail-day excitement had reached its greatest height; but at five minutes after eleven every shop was closed, the last of the traders had bicycled to their homes or clubs, the gendarmes had stumped into the restaurants, and even the tourists were back aboard their steamer. Only muffled laughter and shouts from the bar broke the noonday stillness, the faint rattle of rigging on the schooners tied up along the water front, the distant mutter of the reef combers. Papeete had sunk into a two-hour repose as profound as that of the villages before the arrival of the sack wagon.

Aki Au's Cafe

I dined in a little Chinese cafe, hidden among alleys, gambling and opium dens, hovels where artisans plaited bamboo baskets, tinkered with cheap jewelry, or cut and packed native tobacco. There was a Chinese chest maker across the alley from Aki Au's—the very one, I believe, who made Reretu's chest with the musical lock; a leather worker kept a shop a few doors down the alley; and Aki Au's place itself was far more than a restaurant, for he dealt in illegal narcotics and spirits, and conducted a successful lottery in a room above his shop. His place was known to only a few whites, and no tourist had ever entered it. But Aki Au served big beefsteaks for four francs each, and his coffee was beyond reproach.

Soon he brought me a fine T-bone steak with plenty of potatoes and a bowl of salad; then stood by me as I ate, doing a great deal of talking and saying very little. His singsong voice was pleasantly monotonous, sounding like the distant murmur of ripples, though meaning less, to me. But presently he was gone, leaving me satisfied with my dinner and with only a vague impression that he had spoken at all.

Having finished, I leaned back and, as often before, listened to the noonday stillness, enjoying the solitude of a populated place. I wondered why this love of bitter-sweet solitude had led me to the mountains, to Mexico, to the sea, and last of all to Tahiti; and I wondered to what distant lands it would lead me in the future. Some complex, a psychoanalyst would say; and perhaps he would find a nice long name for it, all of which would merely serve to demonstrate his profundity. But whatever name he gave it, solitude would remain a necessary part of my life.

Sorting over old memories, I recalled the night before I had sailed from San Francisco - nearly three years ago. I had arrived there alone, knowing no one and wishing to know no one. I had walked the streets slowly the whole night, without thought of place or time or destination, save only the destination that I should start for on the morrow - the South Sea Islands. I was vaguely aware of long gully-like streets that cut across the hills, and of the street lights that seemed to approach, envelope me, and then vanish behind my back. But I was keenly aware of a kind of ecstasy, both of mind

and of body, that came from the knowledge that I was alone among thousands of people, an entity apart from this interdependent community.

“Just the man I’ve been looking for!”

Captain Owen’s voice broke into my thoughts. Looking up quickly, I saw my old friend striding across the cafe. We shook hands and smiled our pleasure; then the captain relaxed into a chair to blow out his breath in a long whistle, as though trying to get rid of excess vitality.

“Here, you, Aki Au! Bring me two of your biggest beefsteaks, and plenty of potatoes and a heaping bowl of salad. Yes; and see that it’s a decent bottle of Burgundy!”

He turned to me. “I’ve just brought the Potii in from Penrhyn,” he said. “Sixteen-day voyage with a head wind. That’s the reason for the two beefsteaks. You know how a man craves fresh food after a long voyage at sea?”

“Yes, Captain,” I replied. Then, “You’re looking fit as ever, and I’m mighty glad to see you. How about a few days out in the country, at my place in Vaiiti?”

“Not a chance,” he replied with a grunt of disgust. “With a full cargo of copra, and a crew dancing to get ashore, and a set of mad agents who don’t know an m.o.p. shell from a barnacle, it’s all I can do to escape for an hour and enjoy myself at Aki Au’s.”

Just then the Chinaman came with the wine.

The captain poured a few drops into his glass, asked me to join him, and when I nodded filled my glass and then his own.

“By the way,” he said abruptly, apropos of nothing. “How is your Tahitian now? You should be getting along smartly with the lingo.”

“I’m doing fairly well. In fact, I speak nothing else for months on end.”

“Fine! ... Hurry up with those beefsteaks, Aki Au! Bring them rare!” he called; then settled back to light a cigarette and explain: -

“It’s like this, my boy: we’re looking for a trader to relieve Winning, at Mangaia, for one year, and I’ve been thinking that you’ll be just the man. You speak Tahitian, which is much the same as Mangaian, and you like the natives. The Mangaians are a proud race, and I half suspect that some of them are heathen to this day. They resent the supercilious kind of men my company sends up from New Zealand. These youngsters treat the natives like coolies, with the result that our station is soon boycotted. Now, I think you’ll get along with the natives, for a year; then Winning will be back from

his vacation in the Old Country, and we'll find you another station or send you back to Vaiiti. What do you say?"

"It sounds interesting, Captain, and I thank you for thinking of me, but..."

"Wait a minute! No 'buts' yet awhile," Owen interrupted. "You just think it over for a little. Twenty pounds a month is what we pay, with living quarters, kerosene, and two store boys... Now here come my steaks, so I'll be busy for a time; then we'll see what kind of an agreement we can make."

I could have given him my reply then, but there was no hurry. When Owen had mopped his plate dry with a piece of bread and upturned his glass of wine, he looked up and said:

"I sail a week from tomorrow. How about it - will you go?"

"I hate to refuse, Captain. It's a fine offer; but I simply can't leave Vaiiti now. The fact is, I have just come to Papeete to arrange about buying more land, so you see I'm getting pretty well settled."

Captain Owen eyed me for some time in silence; then he nodded his head thoughtfully, and said: "Well, I've a hunch that you'll be working for us some day, when you get tired of your little paradise. Something's holding you out there, I can see. It may be a pretty face, or a friend, or some little thing such as a good swimming hole in the river that you've kind of got used to taking a morning plunge in, or a cool shady place where you take your siesta - little things like that have a powerful effect on a man's life."

"You're not far wrong, Captain."

"When you want to go trading I'll have a place for you," he went on presently. "It won't be long. The pretty girl will run away with a native boy, your friend will die or quarrel with you, the swimming hole will get filled up, and the tree you sleep under will blow down: then your paradise will disappear."

"You're optimistic today, Captain," I said with a smile. "It happens that there is a pretty face, but luckily we have not taken our life together very seriously; and there's a swimming hole in Vaiiti River, and a fine old alligator-pear tree by the lagoon beach. But in my case there is a friend who keeps me at Vaiiti, and an old man at that. I don't think that he will die for a long time yet, and there's no chance of our quarreling."

Captain Owen shrugged his shoulders. From far in the town we heard the cathedral bell strike one o'clock. Instantly after there came a long blast from the steamer's siren, then a little answering toot from the oil mill at

Fareute. The stores were opening, we knew; again the streets were alive with people; the gendarmes were at their street crossings; the traders bicycling in from their homes; the tourists from the steamer were peering into the shop windows. Even in Aki Au's alley there seemed to be a sudden stirring of life, and Aki Au himself was shuffling between the tables, clearing away the dishes, and hoping, no doubt, that we would soon be on our way.

The Captain rose. "Well, son," he said, "I'm off to the ship now. Come aboard tonight for a bite of ship's fare. And don't forget that offer. It will stand good after the hurricane season, when I am back from the islands."

"I won't forget, Captain;" and with that we parted.

Manea's Share

Several months passed without any further effort to buy land. It was the midst of the hurricane season, with the wind around to the northwest, the rivers swollen, and the roads muddy. But in January, during a temporary lull in the bad weather, we managed to visit Terii-woman and discuss purchasing her share.

Terii-woman and Manea of Hitiaa were the two largest owners in Vaimoe. I knew that if I could induce one of them to sell, all the other owners would part with their shares. As she lived only a few kilometres to leeward, Tuahu and I walked to her house one Monday morning and told her our business.

She would not consider selling, and seemed offended that we should have approached her. "You must think me foolish indeed," she said. "If you pay me much money for my land, my children will beg it from me. I shall be ashamed to refuse them, so they will waste my money in the Chinaman's shop. Then the Reverend Pierre will tell me that I must give a portion of it to the church, and I shall give him what he asks. Soon my money will be gone and I shall have no land. Moreover, if I sell my land, my relatives will quarrel with me, and I shall be ashamed that I parted with it against their wishes."

Yet Terii-woman was not ashamed to make all the copra and keep all the money, refusing it to her children, even her relatives and the Reverend Pierre. So, with our consciences somewhat cleared, we decided that as soon as the trade wind blew again we would approach Manea of Hitiaa.

There were two months to wait. For days on end rain poured down, and often Vaiti River rose six feet or more to flood through the coconut groves and entirely submerge the coveted land of Vaimoe. Rains did not bother my neighbors. Often they fished throughout the day, or even the night, with squalls pelting them, and were none the worse for it. Tomi and his rascals splashed in the muddy river; sometimes they climbed astride the island chestnut trees that had been torn from the banks, and rode them a mile or more down to the sea. To me it seemed a hazardous sport, but no one was hurt.

With the last of March came calms and easterly winds, and for a day or two at a time the trade wind would boom down from the southeast, giving us a taste of the good weather to come. The muddy roads dried and again the sky was stippled with low-flying, fair-weather clouds. One could almost see the tropic vegetation grow. With the earth damp and the sun well overhead, new foliage broke from the breadfruit trees; the oranges, mangoes, and the pineapples ripened; weeds grew above one's head on the river trail to Tuahu's house.

Still, the hurricane season had not come to an end. We knew we were certain to have at least one equinoctial storm before the trade wind settled down to six months of unbroken easterly weather. But we thought little of it at the time - unhappily.

In the latter part of March, with Boulgasse again between the shafts, we drove to the windward side of the island, where Manea lived.

"Don't tell him you want to buy the land, for then he will not sell," Tuahu said to me as we dashed round a hairpin turn on the dizzy Vaihaa cliff. Below us, a mile of pure white beach divided the sea from Manea's gorgelike valley. The brown thatched roof of his house stood out plainly in a grove of huge breadfruit trees.

"How will we buy land unless we suggest to him the matter of selling?"

"Ah, Ropati, you are still young," Tuahu said with a twinkle in his eyes. For a moment he was busy guiding the charging Boulgasse down a steep, boulder-strewn grade. The road was barely wide enough for the buggy.

"Lord deliver us from men carrying fish!" I muttered; then we were over the worst of it, and Tuahu, settling back, was saying that we would make Manea ask us to buy it. My foster father nodded his head and smiled as his thoughts took shape. Presently he unfolded his scheme, we rehearsed our parts, and shortly afterward entered Manea's breadfruit grove.

Manea was a cheerful soul who enjoyed a good drink, a good meal, and a good companion. He was chronically penniless and in debt; but still he managed to entertain his friends with ungrudging hospitality. This was common enough, for in the Tahiti that I remember the poorer natives were invariably the most generous. It was because they lived off the products of the land. Like the "poor fellow" I had met on the sack wagon, they were children of Tahiti who caught their own fish and ate them with their own plantains and their own coconut sauce. The food of Tahiti was their food, and they did very well without the luxuries demanded by the wealthier

natives. For a poor man of Manea's class, a feast would call for a wild boar, a string of milk mullet, breadfruit, plantains, native coffee sweetened with honey, and a tub of orange beer. But to a rich native such a feast would be in bad taste: he required tinned meats and rice, not because they were more palatable but because they cost money, and therefore, by the logic of ostentation, were more desirable. Also, he must have Papeete rum, limes and sugar, fresh bread from the Chinaman, and coffee from a labeled packet. As these things cost money, he soon learned that he could not afford hospitality.

I preferred the poor men, the true children of Tahiti, and even old Manea himself, in spite of his great elephantiac legs which made him waddle in a ducklike manner. Manea was a great character. Of medium height, skinny save for his huge legs and one hand which had swollen to the size of an unhusked coconut, his temper was that of a mischievous but good-hearted schoolboy. His shrewd little eyes, set deeply in a closely furrowed face, seemed constantly interrogating, highly amused with life in general. His forehead slanted back rather sharply, while his shaggy and graying hair hung in hanks and tangles over his ears and the nape of his neck. It reminded me of the untrimmed thatching on a native hut. And of course there was the wart on Manea's nose,

... and thereon stood a tuft of heres,
Reed as the bristles of a sowes eres.

When he saw us approaching he waddled to the road, thus effectively blocking the way so Boulgasse could not carry us to some better grazing ground. Bobbing his head up and down and gesticulating toward Mrs. Manea, in the doorway, he shouted: "It is Tuahu and his son! May you live! Come and eat!"

When Boulgasse had stopped and we were climbing out of the buggy, suddenly Manea threw up his arms, an expression of despair came into his face, and he cried: "Aue-ue! Drive on, Tuahu and his son! This is a day of great shame! Drive on! Leave me to wipe the salt water out of my eyes! Aue-ue! Aue-ue!" (Alas! Alas!)

Tuahu divined the trouble at once. "What is this, Manea?" he shouted with a laugh. "If you are weeping because your beer tub is empty, then you are a foolish man, for you should know that we would bring better drink

than you could brew from your sour Hitiaa oranges. Cheer up, Manea, we have brought that which will put laughter on your lips!"

Manea brightened up visibly at this. "You have guessed rightly!" he cried. "I am greatly ashamed that my relative, Tuahu, and his son should come to my house and find it empty. Yet, perhaps the old woman may find you a thin little fish and the half of a breadfruit for your supper... Eh, old woman?"

"Your brains have gone to your legs, Manea!" Mrs. Manea screamed from the house. "Attend to their horse, and don't let them come in until I have tidied the house and put on my black dress!"

"My son wanted to drive round the house and see your valley," Tuahu said as we unhitched the horse and led him a little beyond the breadfruit grove to tether him in a pasture of water grass. "This son of mine has been pestering me for months about visiting Manea and eating some of the famous shrimps from the Vaihaa River. Well, and here we are, my friend, with a few bottles of wine and our bundle of quilts. You see, we have come to stay all night."

He then reached under the seat to bring out a dozen bottles of wine and a bundle containing our quilts and pillows. In Tahiti it was a breach of good manners to visit even a close relative without bringing one's own bedding. With the bottles and the bundle we followed Manea into the wattle-and-thatch house.

At dusk we were served by the ample and cheerful Mrs. Manea with ruvettus steak grilled over coconut-shell coals, roast breadfruit, tart coconut sauce from a huge gourd, and orange-leaf tea. After the meal we sat on the floor, with our backs to the bamboo walls, smoked pandanus-leaf cigarettes, and sipped our wine. A chimneyless lamp smoked in the corner of the room, some children giggled and squirmed in the corners, while Manea's large wife occupied the doorway, silent but smiling. As the night advanced a few of the neighbors appeared, some to sit outside the wattled walls where they could peep at the strangers and listen; others to come inside.

For hours we talked of everything but the land Vaimoe; but at last Tuahu managed to divert the conversation that way by asking Manea who took care of his small Vaiiti property.

"It is Terii-woman who takes care of my large Vaiiti property," Manea replied, and, as I was watching him closely at the time, I noticed a barely perceptible lifting of his eyebrows.

“He knows what we’re after,” I said to myself. “Tuahu’s scheme won’t work!” Aloud, I muttered: “Oh yes, Terii; I wonder why she never told me she owned the land.”

Manea, with a shrug: “No, no - not that immature coconut, but the old woman who lives to the windward side of the Mataeia church and keeps the whole neighborhood awake with her quarreling.”

Tuahu: “Yes; I know her. She makes copra on the land Vaimoe.”

Manea: “That is the one, my friend.”

Tuahu: “Not a very valuable little land, Vaimoe.”

Manea: “A most valuable large land. It bears three tons of copra a year - and I receive none of it.”

Tuahu had been waiting for this. Now he broke in: “Foolish man, why don’t you take possession of your land?”

“I am old and weak,” Manea sighed, “and the fee-fee is large in my legs, and Vaiiti is far away ... but I will take another glass of wine.”

“It is as I always say,” Mrs. Manea broke in with both a sigh and a smile: “his brains have gone to his legs, and he takes no care of his property... Now, if good beer oranges grew on Vaimoe ...”

After helping Manea to wine, Tuahu suggested: “Why don’t you write to Terii-woman and demand that she give you your share of the copra money?”

Manea upended his glass and set it on the floor with a thump. “I always write to her twice a year,” he said, “on the first day of the southerly winds when the fee-fee fever comes, and again at the rising of the Pleiades, when the hamea fish become poisonous, giving me the fish fever. I write her very angry letters, but it does no good; she must have the fee-fee fever or the fish fever too, for she does not reply like a kind relative. Her letters are also angry. She calls me an old fool and says the land was left to her in a will.”

Tuahu spoke resignedly: “Then there is nothing you can do.” And Manea mumbled: “There is nothing I can do. I am old and weak, and the fee-fee is large in my legs, and my brains have gone to my legs too, as my wife says.”

Suddenly Tuahu sat up, clapped his hand on his thigh, and exclaimed: “manea, the Bible says: ‘For the Lord was angered at his greed, and commanded His servants to take his lands’! Preacher Abraham spoke those words only last Sunday in the Vaiiti church! Manea, if you can’t take the land, like the Bible says, you can at least sell it!”

Again our host raised his eyebrows slightly. His odd smile confirmed my belief that he knew we had come purposely to buy his land. Perhaps Terii-woman had warned him; but he gave no intimation of it in words: he nodded his head for a little space, drained his refilled glass, held it up for yet another refilling, and muttered:

“Perhaps, some day, I will sell this valuable land of Vaimoe. Yes; if it is so written in the Book, as Tuahu said, then perhaps some day I will sell it.”

“Manea, you are making a wise decision,” Tuahu said, and I am sure that he meant it, for the land was of no value to Manea, and, anyway, Tuahu was incapable of a vicious lie.

Blinking into his wine, Manea continued: “Yes, I agree with you. But who is rich enough to buy this valuable land of Vaimoe? It is a great property, and few men will be able to pay me what it is worth.”

Tuahu: “For your sake, my son will buy it. I shall order him to buy it!”

“But Tuahu!” I exclaimed. “I came here to visit Manea - not to buy land. Besides, I am short of money just now.”

Tuahu: “Manea wants revenge, not money. He will sell this land cheap!”

Manea sat up at this and his face lengthened. “What’s that, my friend?” he cried. “Vaimoe is a very valuable land.”

“Where is this Vaimoe?” I asked casually.

Tuahu replied in a scolding tone: “Child, have you lived in Vaiiti all these years not to know the names of the lands? Vaimoe is that little swampy worthless tract which joins your land to leeward.”

“Well, then,” I grumbled before Manea could interrupt, “as we are all children of Tahiti, I will help Manea. I will pay him a good price, though it is true that I have more property than I need. I will give him a thousand francs for his share in the land.”

“Ah, son of Tuahu,” Manea replied with a sigh, “it is true, as you say, that we are all children of Tahiti and should help one another. Now hearken: I am old and weak, and with fee-fee large in my legs, while you are a strong rich youth. Surely, considering that you wish to help a poor old man, you can make it two thousand francs!”

In this manner we exchanged courtesies for some time, finally agreeing to one thousand six hundred francs. This was satisfactory to us both: the price was more than Manea’s share was worth and I was glad to pay it. But the difficult business lay ahead, and if I had been aware of its complexity I

should never have attempted to buy the land Vaimoe. However, I entered into it with confidence bred of ignorance.

“Now, Manea,” I said cheerfully, “let us get your own succession down on paper, and then, to save trouble later, jot down the names of the other owners. First: who was the original owner of this land at the time the French divided the island so that only one man could own one property?”

“It was my grandfather, Tuane Tavana a Tiapape,” Manea said at once.

I wrote Tuane’s name at the top of a large sheet of paper, and, by questioning Manea, started to work out a complete genealogical tree of all that man’s descendants. It appeared that Tuane had eight children, each of whom had married from one to five times. Of the original eight, all had had legitimate children, some illegitimate children whom they had recognized, other illegitimate children whom they had failed to recognize. Under the French law the latter children would have no rights in the land Vaimoe.

Two of the second generation had died, willing their property to people of other successions, who had in turn died, leaving their shares in Vaimoe to all their relatives!

Another of the second generation had sold his share, and the purchaser had died, leaving it to another group of people.

Still others had made divisions of the land for their children, who in turn had subdivided their tiny strips of land into still tinier strips until each was no more than wide enough to plant a row of coconuts.

Of the second generation there were forty-six, and Manea was one of these; but he owned an entire eighth share, for he had no brothers or sisters. Of the third generation Manea named one hundred and sixty-eight owners!

It would be no less tiresome to read than to write the history of that night’s work, which I expected to dispatch so summarily. But I must not omit the little old lady who sat cross-legged in a dark corner of the house, smoking native tobacco. There is always a little old lady at such a gathering, and though she is retiring, and all but lost in the shadows, one hears too often the sound of her voice. On this night, time and again we would stop, with the genealogy apparently complete, and, refilling our glasses, take a final nightcap before lying back on our mats. Then, without fail, this superannuated person would pipe in a mocking tone:

“But how about ‘the thing,’ Mrs. So-and-so, who lives in the Marquesas - or is in the Leper Colony of Molokai?”

“Ah! That is right, old one; I had forgotten her!” Manea would exclaim. “She is the third wife of Faatomo a Iaroa; she inherited her share, etc., *etc.* ...” until my head swam with fourth cousins, nephews, aunts-in-law. But there was no way out of it save to get a clean sheet of paper and go through the genealogy of Mrs. So-and-so, at last to find that she had ten or fifteen francs coming to her and that it would cost me as many dollars to obtain her signature.

And so the work went on till morning, when even the little old lady could think of no more relatives. I laid my pencil down only when the sun was rising and Mrs. Manea was calling us to coffee. I am certain that, had the night been longer, my tree would have continued to grow, *ad infinitum* - or, at least, until every soul in the Society Islands was included among the owners of Vaimoe.

Manea Goes Fishing

It was a part of Tuahu's plan to go to Papeete with Manea as soon as possible, so as to give him little time to change his mind; but Manea would not hear of it. What! His relative, Tuahu, come to Hitiaa for the one and only purpose of a friendly visit; and the youth, Ropati, accommodate him by buying his share in the valuable land, Vaimoe - and they return to Vaiiti without being properly feasted? It was unthinkable!

Tuahu explained everything after he had had a talk with Manea. We would rest during the day, go deep-sea fishing for ruvettus during the night, feast to-morrow, and, weather permitting, dive to Papeete on the following day. Also, Tuahu said, lowering his eyes and becoming hamaa, there was a matter of great delicacy, a little request from Manea, to enable him to do justice to his guests at the coming feast ... "You understand?"

"Certainly, Tuahu; will two hundred francs be enough?"

"More than enough, Ropati!" Tuahu exclaimed, smiling his relief. "Manea will pay you from the land money, of course; and it will be a kind of surety that he will go through with the business."

"I don't think that we need any surety from Manea, Tuahu; but if he changes his mind we can just consider the two hundred francs as our contribution toward the feast."

So everything was arranged satisfactorily: there would be resting and fishing and feasting - and why do to-day what we could do to-morrow? Were we not children of Tahiti? Only the white men had that pointless obsession which made them get things done in a hurry. Thus we slept that day; but in the evening, after a fine meal of river shrimps and breadfruit, we prepared for the night's fishing.

First Manea cut a V-shaped fork of ironwood to be used as a fishhook. He drove a ten penny nail through the end of one prong, for a barb, and fastened his three-hundred-fathom line to the end of the other prong. The nail was lashed firmly in place so it would not split the wood, and was sharpened by a few rubs on the tire of one of the buggy wheels. The finished article, I thought, might be serviceable as a hook on which to hang whole butchered beeves, or as a cargo hook. Of one-inch-diameter

ironwood, it might have supported a ton dead weight; but that a fish would approach to within fifty yards of it seemed to me absurd.

While Manea was occupied with his hook, one of the children had caught an old red rooster, decapitated, plucked, and tossed him into the canoe.

“Nothing like an old rooster for bait,” Manea told me. “A ruvettus simply can’t resist a drumstick or a juicy wing bone!”

A few drinking nuts for food and water, and we put off to sea - Manea, Tuahu, and I paddling out alone two miles or more to the fishing grounds, for the rest of the household were to spear shrimps by torchlight and comb the reef for lobsters, crabs, and eels.

It was a fine night, steely calm, with a new moon low to westward and only a scattering of clouds low along the horizon. The mountains of Tahiti stood out sharply against the sky, but the valleys were lost in shadow, and the distant headlands seemed to meet and dissolve in the sea. Between us and the beach was a mile-wide gap in the reef, but we could see the rise and fall of the combers on either hand, and their thunder came to us loudly across the still water. Presently we caught sight of flashes of torchlight in the valley above Manea’s house, and, as the night wore on, bamboo flares appeared on the reef to the north, disclosing tiny figures moving slowly beyond the white wall of breakers. About the same time, a bonfire blazed high up on one of the ridges: it was a pig hunter, Manea told us, signaling that he had made his kill.

Manea had baited his clumsy hook with a leg of the rooster, and paid out the whole three hundred fathoms of line. The fish would bite, he said, as soon as the moon went down. He wound the end of the line round his great knotted leg, which was propped up on one of the outrigger booms. Tuahu and I filled our pipes; and thus we sat and smoked for a space, thinking our own thoughts or none at all, as is the way with fishermen, and other men.

Presently the moon sank behind the western cloud rack. For a little time the clouds were lined with yellow light, but soon it faded and was gone. The night darkened, the constellations brightened and were perfected. Scorpio rose, the Southern Cross and the Centauri were just visible above the mountains, and to the north the Great Bear lay low over the sea. By imperceptible degrees the Milky Way formed, out of nothingness, it seemed, until all at once we were aware that it was above us, a great glowing arch across the sky.

In an hour or two the land breeze flowed down from the mountains, as cool and clean and fragrant as the rivers of Tahiti themselves. When the canoe had started to drift, Tuahu picked up one of the paddles and, heading into the wind, paddled slowly, his eyes on Manea's line to ascertain that it was straight up and down in the water.

It was midnight before Manea had a bite. My head had been nodding, and I was wondering whether I should stow myself in the bottom of the canoe for a watch below, when suddenly Manea jumped to his feet, with a startling yell.

"I got him! Ai-ya! I got him!" he shouted, and started hauling in his line, hand over hand. But presently his excitement lessened, he muttered an obscure Tahitian curse, and started handling the line in a fribbling manner.

"What's the matter, Manea?"

"Ma'o!" Manea growled back. (Shark!)

"That's because of the rooster bait," Tuahu muttered, laying his paddle across the gunwales and wiping his hands on his shirt, preparatory to refilling his pipe. "Who ever heard of fishing ruvettus with rooster? You'll catch nothing but sharks. Now, if you had used flying fish ..."

"You're as bad as Maui-the-First-Born," Manea grunted. "But just wait and see what my bait brings up."

With that he slung a small shark over the gunwale; then stood over him a moment, watching him thrash the hull with his tail. Gradually a grin formed on Manea's lips. He put one foot on the shark's belly, leaned over to twist out the hook, and, grasping the shark by the tail, he swung him once round his head and flung him into the air. Then he stood motionless, in a peculiarly dramatic attitude, gazing fixedly upward but paying no attention to the shark as he circled through the air to land with a splash in the sea.

"That's the way Maui-the-Last-Born did it," Manea shouted suddenly; then he laughed a trifle cynically, as one might who had just said his part in a bad tragedy and stepped into the wings. He sank down on his seat, rebaited his hook, tied a rock to it, and dropped it over the side.

"Go ahead, tell the story," Tuahu said presently, when all but the last few fathoms of line had trailed over the gunwale, and the end had again been wound round Manea's leg.

Our host leaned forward until his face was close to mine. His sharp little eyes seemed to glow, and there was a leering grin on his lips, such as might

have appeared on the lips of those strange mana-hune bards of former days when they chanted their extravagant tales.

“How came the breadfruit to Tahiti?” he asked abruptly; then, without waiting for a reply, went on: “And how came the clumps of bananas and the fields of yams? And all the fish in the sea as well as all the stars in the sky? And Tahiti itself: How came Tahiti to rise out of the sea, eh? You don’t know? Well, I’ll tell you.”

Manea's Fish Story

One day the three gods, Maui-the-First-Born, Maui-the-Second-Born, and Maui-the-Last-Born, went fishing, and for a long time the first two gods had all the luck. They pulled up all the fine food fish of the sea, while the poor little three-fingered god caught only sharks.

"Ai-ya! Why did you come with us, you cripple?" one of the two would shout. "You catch only sharks!"

"Hai! Weakling brother, look at this fellow!" the other would shout as he tossed a fat albacore into the canoe. "I bring up only the finest fish. No sharks for a fisherman like me!"

But Maui-the-Last-Born kept fishing patiently, pulling up one shark after the other; and though his heart wept because of the stinging words of his brothers, he said nothing - just kept on pulling up sharks.

"Whoops!" by and by shouted the first Maui. "A number-one barracuda! My wife and I eat to-night!"

"Whoops!" shouted the second Maui. "About as fat a dolphin as I've hooked this season. The wife's fond of dolphin... Does your wife eat dolphin, little three-fingered god, or does she care only for shark meat?"

"Aue atu ei!" grunted the first Maui. "I had quite a fight with that big tuna. Well, thank goodness, it wasn't a shark! It must be hard work pulling up all those sharks, little half-a-man!"

But Maui-the-Last-Born just kept on pulling up one shark after the other for a long, long time - maybe three, four days, till, all at once, there was a tremendous tug on his line. In he pulled, hand over hand. "Ai-ya!" he yelled. "I got one fine fish this time, all right!"

"It's only a shark!" sneered the first Maui.

"Another shark!" laughed the second Maui.

"No shark at all!" yelled the three-fingered god, and in he pulled.

At this point in the story Manea demonstrated how the third Maui had pulled in his fish. With violent gesticulations he gave us a graphic representation of the struggle. For a time he would haul in frantically on an imaginary fishline; then, cursing, he would lay the line over the gunwale and hold on tightly. Or, again, panting and grunting, he would pull in slowly

and laboriously until the fish, it appeared, dashed off, and there was no holding him. Then Manea would yell as he pretended that the line had burnt his fingers, and reaching down he would again take a bight over the gunwale.

But finally he gestured the fish into the canoe; then, pointing to it with one of the fingers of his swollen hand, he asked: "Well, what do you think it is?"

"Another shark," I hazarded.

"Not at all," said Manea in a tone of certainty.

"It is a nice field of yams!"

"A field of yams, you said?"

"Yes," snapped Manea; "and you needn't speak in that skeptical tone. It is a field of yams, perhaps two or three hectares of the round kind we call ufi mene-mene."

He then went on with his story.

Maui-the-First-Born and Maui-the-Second-Born laughed about the field of yams, though they were a little jealous that their brother should have pulled up so valuable a property. It wasn't sportsmanlike, they said, to catch such things as fields of yams. They kept on pulling up the same kinds of fish - every kind in the sea, as a matter of fact: little red mullets and big blue carangoids; South-Sea demoiselles and gigantic dogtooth tunas; pipefish and swordfish, sunfish and moonfish and starfish, sailfish and needlefish, a few whales, some sea serpents, and a school or two of porpoises.

Then Maui-the-Last-Born had another bite, and this time he brought up a number-one banana plantation!

"Heh! He's got a banana plantation!" exclaimed the first Maui.

"Yes," cried the youngest brother, "and the nice red variety of bananas, too!"

"Pooh! Nothing but a banana plantation!" she second Maui sneered.

"But they're fine for banana puddings," laughed the three-fingered god.

The two brothers didn't laugh so much about this, for, though neither yams nor bananas are sportsmanlike things to catch, still the gods like them both; and when, a little later, Maui-the-Last-Born pulled up a whole grove of breadfruit trees, the brothers became green with envy.

"The little upstart!" one cried. "He's trying to shame us!"

“Never mind,” growled the other as he swung a thin little triggerfish over the side; “next time we go fishing we’ll leave him ashore to weed his yams and bananas and breadfruit!”

Then they turned round in the canoe so their backs were to him, and “shook the salt water out of their eyes.”

The next time Maui-the-Last-Born let out his line he decided to fish deep, six thousand fathoms down. So he paid out the first line, and the middle line, and the last line, until finally his hook touched the bottom of the sea; and thus he fished for a long time, until, by and by, he wondered if his bait had been nibbled off, so he decided to pull up.

“Whoops!” he yelled suddenly, thinking he had a bite. “I got the grandpapa of all the fishes now!”

Maui-the-First-Born and Maui-the-Second-Born looked over their shoulders and laughed. “You’ve got your hook fouled in the bottom!” they cried, and grinned at one another.

“I guess I have,” the youngest brother muttered glumly, so he took a bight with his line across the gunwale, wrapped one end of it round his foot, and waited for a sea to raise the canoe and wrench the hook loose. A long time he waited, maybe three, four days; then a monster sea came, and the canoe was heaved hundreds of feet into the air; but the third Maui’s hook, holding fast, broke a great mass from the bottom of the sea!

“Ai-ya!” Maui-the-Last-Born sang out. “Now I’ve got him!” and he started to pull in. “Ai-ya!” he sang out again and again as, hand over hand, he pulled in his line.

Again Manea demonstrated by graphic and forceful gesticulations how Maui had pulled in his fish, straining, struggling, his eyes bulging, sweat actually streaming down his face. “Ai-ya! Ai-ya!” he yelled again and again; and he became so excited that he must have for the moment believed himself in the canoe of the gods, and about to land the most remarkable fish that had ever been pulled out of the ocean.

“There it is!” Manea shouted finally, letting out his breath in a long expiration of relief. “The Great Island of Tahiti!”

“He pulled up Tahiti?”

“Exactly. And he flung the yams and bananas and breadfruit ashore; then, turning to his brothers,” - here Manea turned pertly to Tuahu, - “who were weeping with envy, he cried: ‘Now, brothers, just because you laughed about my catching sharks, I’m going to catch a real shark. This one is going

to be such a one as was never seen before, and it is going to be my prestige symbol forever!’”

So he let down his line a fifth time, and presently, sure enough, a shark took his hook. Maui hauled in until the great brute was at the surface; and he was so big his tail stretched beyond the sea into the Land-of-the-Sky, and his two pectoral fins thrashed the most distant oceans in the world, and his mouth was big enough to swallow the great island of Hawaii.

Maui-the-First-Born and Maui-the-Second-Born glanced once at the shark; then, dropping their lines, they crouched in the bottom of the canoe and whined with fear; but Maui-the-Last-Born stood upright, plunged his ironwood spear into the shark, and with a mighty heave hauled him out of the water and flung him into the sky!

“And there he is to this day, hook, line, spear, and all!” Manea cried dramatically, with a sweep of his elephantiac hand across the sky. “The hook!” and he pointed to the stars in the tail of the Scorpion. “The line!” with a gesticulation toward the tangle of stars in Sagittarius. “The spear!” and he pointed to the black nebula in Ophiuchus. “Maui’s shark!” and his hand swept the Milky Way from north to south.

“Now,” Manea concluded, returning to his thwart, “It’s time I caught a ruvettus.”

Soon he had one of the slimy fang-toothed brutes, right enough; then, as though the fish had only been waiting for Manea to finish his story before biting, they took the hook, one after the other, until the canoe was deep in the water and the last wing of the red rooster had been tied on to the nail-barbed hook. Only then did we paddle ashore; and by the time we had beached our canoe and walked up the trail to Manea’s house, it was morning and Mrs. Manea was busy in the cookhouse preparing our coffee.

The Professor

Later in the morning Tuahu and I walked down the road to meet the white resident and invite him to the feast. Manea had suggested it, adding that I would be glad to have one of my countrymen at the table. We found him in a grove of island chestnuts, near a ruinous European house that the chief of Hitiaa had put at his disposal, hacking unsuccessfully at an unhusked coconut with an axe. He was a big man, I noticed, broad-shouldered and slim at the waist; and he was dressed in a brown woolen suit that grated against the tropic background. His tanned shoes were of a flashy bulldog style, but now were down at the heels and out at the toes. He wore no socks, there was a remarkable brown derby on his head, and his face was unshaved.

“Iaorana, popaa!” Tuahu greeted him. (May you live, white man!)

The man looked up, smiled rather threateningly, I thought, dropped his axe, and approached us.

“Your honor!” he said, slowly and distinctly, mispronouncing the native greeting so oddly that I could not help smiling; but he took my smile for one of greeting, and, “I see you’re a white man, too,” he said, holding out his hand.

“Yes,” I replied, giving my name and shaking his hand. “I live on the other side of the island, but am visiting here for a day or two. My host, Manea, suggested that I ask you to feast with us today.”

“A feed! That sounds boocoo to me!” After fingering in one of his pockets he brought out a thumbled professional card and handed it to me. “Samson Strongfort, that’s me,” he said as I read the card. “Professeur de Box, as they say in the lingo down here. Gimme back the card, mister; I ain’t got no more. Thanks... If you hear of any native bucks wanting to take a course in pugilism, fisticuffs, sparring, the art of self-defense, send 'em along to ze professeur of ze boxe. I’ll teach 'em: five francs a time.”

Turning to Tuahu, I translated what the professor had said.

“But why does he want to teach the young men to fight?” Tuahu asked.

“So as to make five francs now and then,” I replied; but Tuahu could not see the point. Just then the professor broke in:

“About that feed, mister, - I forget your name, - that sounds ace-high to me, and I accepts with the polite removal of me derby,” which words he put into action, disclosing a partially bald head. A moment later he confided, leering a little: “Tell you the truth, partner, I ain’t had a square meal since I come to this island. I thought there was going to be plenty of free beans in the South Seas, like I read about, but I’ve found it was all apple sauce. There ain’t no free chow here but coconuts, and I’m damned if a man can eat them. I’m a meat eater, no nut crank.”

I turned to Tuahu and translated. The old man looked round with a perplexed smile. “Breadfruit,” he said, nodding toward a grove of trees. “Fei in the hills and the sea full of fish... Why should he be hungry in Tahiti?”

Again I acted as interpreter. The professor shrugged his shoulders. “Breadfruit me eye!” he said with a grin. “How am I going to get 'em? I ain’t no squirrel. I been looking at them breadfruit for a month, and it ain’t filled me belly. And I went up in the mountains, but I couldn’t find no red bananers, or whatever you calls 'em. And fish - I guess there’s fish in the ocean from what guys tell me, but I never seen one outside a fish market.”

“You look hungry,” I observed thoughtfully.

“Hungry’s no word for it, partner. I ain’t had nothing to eat this morning; and I’ve been trying a long time to open this coconut, but the damned thing’s one too many for me. Lord, it’s tough!”

At that Tuahu and I had a few words together, then went to work.

“There’s always an old fishpole where there’s a house,” Tuahu muttered, picking up a bamboo pole that was leaning against one of the trees. “Tear off a strip of bark from that hibiscus tree, Ropati,” and when I had done so, he made a line of it, tied one end to the pole, and secured a handful of green leaves to the other end. “Now, Ropati, you go fishing while I husk that nut and gather a few chestnuts.”

With that Tuahu sharpened a stick of wood, thrust the blunt end into a crab hole, and, picking up the coconut, wrenched off the husk in no time by pressing it down on the sharpened stick and prying it off.

“I tried to do it that way once,” the professor told us, “but I jabbed the stick in my hand. It ain’t healed up yet... What you going to do with the fishpole, mister?”

“Going fishing,” said I. “Come along.” And, walking a few yards away, to a spot where the ground was riddled with crab holes, I sat on a fallen tree

trunk, whipped out my line with its bait of leaves, and waited for a bite.

“Look here, mister,” the professor exclaimed, as though undecided whether I was making sport of him or was merely mad, “what’s the big idea? Are you bughouse?”

“Just sit down,” I replied, “and I’ll show you.”

Presently a big land crab crawled out of his hole, semaphored with his claws for a moment, then scuttled to the leaves and took hold of them. Instantly I jerked the pole, and the crab, failing to let go in time, was flipped to my feet. A tap over the head dispatched him, as it did the next one and the next one, until, in the course of five minutes, there were twenty fat crabs at our feet.

“Can you eat them things?” the professor asked wistfully.

“Certainly; they’re as good as sea crabs.”

“Lord God A’mighty, and me going hungry! I sure likes crabs, mister, I do!”

By then Tuahu had a fire blazing. When it had died down to a bed of glowing coals, we laid the nuts and the crabs on top of it. In ten minutes they were done; and thus, within twenty minutes of the time that Tuahu had decided to prepare a meal, it was cooked and set before us - roast chestnuts, grilled land crabs, and coconut meat. The professor dined heartily, smacking his lips over the crab meat; but Tuahu and I only nibbled the nuts, for we were saving our appetites for the big feast ahead.

At the end of the meal the professor told me his story. During the war he had saved several thousand dollars, and, aware that his professional days were past, he had decided to invest it for his old age. A friend had advised him to buy German marks; and he had followed the advice, buying enough to fill a fair-sized chest, fully expecting that they would rise to the pre-war value as soon as Germany got on her feet, when he would be immensely wealthy. But the mark continued to drop until, finally, it was repudiated as currency.

At this bad piece of fortune the professor decided to renounce civilization; so he came to Tahiti, with his chestful of marks, hoping to live in peace and plenty without money, and to reclaim his fortune by teaching boxing. So far fortune had evaded him, and though he had found peace, - save when the mosquitoes had attacked him in this particularly swampy island-chestnut grove, - of plenty there had been none.

He showed us the chestful of marks before accompanying us to Manea's house.

It was a grand feast, spread on banana leaves in a grassy plot under the breadfruit trees. Each guest had a half coconut shell filled with coconut sauce, and the food was simply heaped in front of us: two whole roast pigs browned to a turn; numerous fowls baked and boiled in native curry and coconut milk; ruvettus steak, baked ruvettus, and grilled ruvettus; raw shrimps served with lime juice and fermented coconut sauce, boiled shrimps and fried shrimps; a few sea crabs; bowls of raw mullet, lobsters from the reef, and delectable sea centipedes. And there were all the foods of Tahiti: the feis, breadfruits, bananas, yams, mangoes, alligator pears. Last of all, for the appearance of the thing, Manea had bought a few tins of New Zealand beef as well as many loaves of bread. These looked nice on the table, he thought, a kind of decoration; but no one was expected to eat them, nor did they.

There were drinking nuts, too, and many bottles of wine; and each of us wore flower garlands round his neck and head. When we had eaten our fill, the food was removed, save for a few savory morsels, such as the head of a wild pig or a bowl of curried chicken; and then the wine bottles circulated freely. The younger people sang, the girls jumped to their feet impulsively to move through the figures of a Tahitian dance, an accordion appeared from nowhere to squawk its inharmonious notes, and now and again Manea or another of the older men would rise to give us a long speech, often weeping before he had had his say. Then Tuahu would rise to reply in his easy-flowing and faultless Tahitian, gravely, courteously, with a touch of unconscious humor.

Presently I found myself watching the professor, who sat across from me, eating voraciously and drinking large quantities of wine.

"I wonder why he doesn't walk round the island," I thought, recalling the score or more of beachcombers who had passed Vaiiti, and, in a few cases, had stopped with Tuahu for the night. "He doesn't call himself a beachcomber, but he is one, nevertheless. Therefore he should walk round the island."

"Why don't you walk round the island?" I asked when I had caught his eye.

He did not understand, so I explained: "Well, when a man is short of funds in Tahiti he generally walks round the island. It's a good way to get

free food and lodging; and if one is careful to avoid stopping at the same places twice, he can keep going round, year after year.”

Reaching for a leg of chicken and refilling his wineglass, the professor said he would consider it; then he asked me to explain further.

“A native never refuses a guest who appears in the evening,” I went on, insincerely. “Just walk a few kilometres each day, slowly, resting when you find a cool shady place, swimming in the rivers and loafing about the Chinese shops until evening. Then pick out a native house and stroll up to it, casual-like. Shout, 'Your honor!' to the man of the place, pat his wife on the shoulder, and say something nice about the children. When they ask you where you are going, say you are looking for a hotel to spend the night, and as there are no hotels in the districts, they will invite you to spend the night with them. They may even feast you.

“Next morning,” I concluded with a flash of inspiration, “you might recompense your host by giving him a thousand marks!”

The professor’s eyes sparkled. “I’ll do it!” he exclaimed. “Today!” He reached for the wine bottle, but it was empty, for the last of Manea’s bottles had been upended. “I’ll do it now!” he shouted, and, rising, he bade us good-bye, with polite derby, and shuffled unsteadily down the road.

The Notary

Next morning at daylight we started for Papeete. Manea rode ahead, astride a bony mare, his great feet bumping against the horse's ribs like two bags of copra. Tuahu and I followed in the buggy; and for once we went at a respectable pace, for Manea effectively blocked the road so that Boulgasse, try as he might, could not get around him.

"I will be glad to get back to Vaiiti," Tuahu said presently. "I was thinking last night that this is the beginning of the albacore season, and that soon the sailing canoes will be putting to sea, for the big fishing." And after a little, with a sigh: "Soon I will be too old to go fishing for albacore; perhaps even this season will be my last."

"The night at sea with Manea got you into the fishing mood, Tuahu. Well, when I recall the loads of fei you bring down from the mountains, I can't believe that you will be too old for deep-sea fishing for many years to come."

"The albacore fishing is different," Tuahu replied. "It requires strong and active young men who can leap on the outrigger when the canoe has all but capsized; who can whip the great fish in as fast as you whip in the little river nato with your fly. But you shall see; I will take you out the first day the men put to sea in Faatomo's sailing canoe... Look, Ropati, there is the white man!"

I turned and, following Tuahu's gaze, saw the professor, smiling, flower-wreathed, leaving a hut by the lagoon beach. He was surrounded by a group of natives; and when he saw me he waved his hand, and shouted: "That was ace-high advice you gave me, mister!"

We passed on. Though I looked over my shoulder till he was lost round a bend in the road, I did not see him hand his native host a thousand-mark note - perhaps he still had hopes of Germany's honoring her old currency.

In Papeete we stopped only for lunch at Aki Au's; then hurried to the notary to draw up a deed for the purchase of Manea's share in Vaimoe. After glancing over my forest of family trees, the notary decided to check them over.

"Your name is Manea?" he asked. Manea replied in the affirmative.

The notary: "Your grandfather was Tuane Tavana a Tiapape?"

Manea: "Yes."

The notary: "Your father was Teina Maru a Marau?"

Manea: "That is the truth."

How smoothly everything proceeded! I was tempted to assure the notary that my family trees were always correct.

The notary: "You are the son of your father, Teina Maru a Marau?"

Manea: "I am not."

The notary went on, unperturbed: "Your father, Teina Maru a Marau,—of whom you say you are not the son,—was he the son of your grandfather, Tuane Tavana a Tiapape?"

Manea: "Of course not! Foolish one, how could he be, when I am not his son?"

Tuahu touched my arm to intimate that I should not interrupt. The old man's eyes were troubled, but still there was a trace of mild amusement in his kindly face.

Just then the notary turned to me and said in a clear, concise manner: "If I am correct, monsieur, Teina Maru a Marau was Manea's father, but Manea is not his son; nor is Manea's grandfather the father of Manea's father. This is perfectly clear, of course, for you made out these family trees."

He spoke so convincingly that I was forced to believe it must be all right. I nodded my head; the notary smiled, turned to Manea, and asked:—"Manea, who was your mother?"

Manea: "She was Mohina-woman."

The notary: "Are you sure?"

Manea: "Very much so."

The notary: "Was she the wife of your father, Teina Maru a Marau?"

Manea: "Not at all. She never even saw him."

The notary: "Ah! Now things are clearing up. Manea, who was the husband of your mother?"

Manea: "Which one?"

The notary: "The one who begat you."

Manea: "Oh, that fellow; he was a different person altogether. His name was Taroa Tavana a Tiapape."

The notary muttered something to himself about not being able to find the name on my list; then, to Manea: "Was Taroa Tavana a Tiapape the son of your grandfather, Tuane Tavana a Tiapape?"

Manea: “Of course.”

The Big Fishing

Tuahu woke me at three in the morning. "There is no time to waste, Ropati," he said. "The men are waiting in the canoe, and they are anxious to set sail before the land wind dies."

"Get up, Ropati; we're going fishing!" Tomi shouted.

"Are you going too, Tomi?"

"Of course I'm going!" Tomi cried back. "I'm a man now!"

"He will go with the albacore fishermen this season," Tuahu told me as I jumped out of bed, lit the lamp, and dressed. "I want him to grow up as a true son of the islands: one who will be able to catch albacore for Mama-Reretu and me when I am too old to join the fishermen."

While hurriedly drinking a steaming cup of coffee that Terii had prepared, I heard a sail slatting softly in the light breeze and subdued voices from the lagoon beach. "Make haste!" someone called. "We must be far to sea by sunrise!"

"We have coconuts in the canoe," Tuahu said.

"They are the food and drink of fishermen; but you may bring other food if you wish."

"Coconuts will do for me, Tuahu... Come, I am ready!" And we left the house to join the fishermen on the beach.

There were Faiipo the strong man, Tuahu's son Faatomo, who owned the forty-foot sailing canoe, Pauoto, Tevearai the loud-mouthed, a young Tuamotuan pearl diver named Ariki, Tuahu, Tomi, and myself. We shoved off, the mountain wind filled the sail, and we glided silently over the black water, through Vaiiti Passage, to sea. There the canoe rose gently to the long southeasterly swell; the feather from her bows flashed with phosphorescence; and there was a glowing pool of churning water under her stern that seemed to flow aft until it dissolved in the murky emptiness of the sea.

"Will we have luck, Ariki?" Tuahu asked presently.

The Tuamotuan shrugged his shoulders. "We are only wasting our time," he said. "It is too early in the season." Ariki was a newcomer to Vaiiti. About twenty-five years old, handsome in a savage way, he was

reputed to be one of the best pearl divers of Hikueru: a man who could dive naked twenty-five fathoms down and make his two hundred francs each day of the season. He had married one of Faiipo's ample daughters; but I believe that he was unhappy in Vaiiti, that he longed for the inhospitable sandbanks of the atolls, with their gleaming white coral beaches and their wind-gnarled trees.

"We will not catch a single fish," Tevearai volunteered emphatically. "If you had asked my advice about the fishing, I should have told you to stay ashore and eat tinned salmon. There are no fish in the sea; there never were any fish; there never will be any - not a single one!"

"We will not even see a flying fish," said Faiipo.

"Nor a single flock of birds," Faatomo added.

"But I think it probably that we will be capsized and all drowned," Pauoto opined.

"What a pity! I might have stayed at home and played marbles," Tomi grumbled insincerely. "Whoever heard of a man catching a fish?"

"Well, Ropati," Tuahu asked diffidently, "What do you think? Will we have luck?"

"Not a chance!" I declared. I knew my neighbors believed that the only way to assure success was to anticipate failure. One sanguine hope, in their minds, would have spoiled the day's fishing, so I replied that which was expected from me. "We will not so much as see a dead squid floating on the water," said I; "but we are almost certain to be capsized, as Pauoto says, or to break our outrigger, or to be blown to sea, where we will all starve to death!"

Tuahu chuckled appreciatively. "You are right," he said; "but another white man might have brought us bad luck. Now, though I know that there is not a chance to catch a single fish, still I don't mind trying, just to get my hand in practice for the coming season."

We were about five miles from land by then, and the wind had died down till it no more than filled the sail. Still we moved along at a fair rate, and as we left the land behind us a magical change seemed to come over the face of the sea. At first I was aware of only a transition in the coloring; then of confused glimmerings that seemed to move and fade and disappear, but gradually to assume a more definite shape until, all at once, I became aware that the sea was streaked with parallel lines of phosphorescence set ablaze by countless fish. The sight fascinated me. Imagine the sea, as far as the eye

can reach, striped with glowing lines of silver, paling, vanishing, gleaming dimly, glowing with phosphoric light, disappearing only to flash forth again. And in the midst of it all one straight, broad, and lambent highway receding from the mother fish, the sailing canoe. Under the stern it rose in a churning coruscation that dimmed gradually until it was lost to landward.

Suddenly there was a great commotion in the sea. The lines of silver were broken into tangled masses of flashing curves and angles. Then, like a rocket cutting through the air, a swordfish raced past us to break water a few yards beyond our outrigger. He landed with a loud splash which hurled flaming spray into the air; then, almost instantly, the sea was calm, the albacore and bonito had sounded, the swordfish had caught his victim; only the sailing canoe streaked the water in her wake. But before long the fish were back again, one school to windward, another over our bows, until again we were sailing through a sea of flashing parallel lines.

The wind died down with the dawn and the fish sounded or finned elsewhere; but before long the southeast trade touched us lightly, so, hauling in on our sheet, we started off on another tack, still out to sea but now with the wind on our beam. Then, the breeze freshening, Pauoto, the heavy man, jumped onto one of the outrigger cross booms to steady the canoe; but soon even he could not keep the outrigger in the water, so he called for me to join him, and together we perched far out over the sea.

It was a fine sight, watching the long slim canoe dash through the sea, flinging spray from her bows, foam boiling up under her stern. Ariki and Faiipo stood forward of the mast, their eyes peeled for the flocks of birds that would indicate schools of albacore; Tuahu held the steering paddle, while Faatomo and Tomi tended the sheet, ready to let it run out should the outrigger rise too high from the water. Tevearai sat in the extreme afterend of the canoe, polishing his pearl-shell lures, ready with his advice for anyone, waiting for the fishing to commence.

But it was long before we got among the fish. Time and again Ariki would sight a flock of birds far away above the horizon, and we would head toward them; but soon the birds would vanish, and we would lay into the wind for a time, waiting until our lookouts again pointed to where a scarcely visible flock of terns and boobies circled over the sea.

Then suddenly we were among them. Thousands of birds seemed to materialize from the thin air, to scream above us, circle and dive for the

flying fish that now fanned out from our bows; and a few seconds later the sea became alive with countless great albacore and bonito!

“After them, Tevearai! After them, Ariki!” Tuahu shouted; and it came as almost a shock to me to hear a fierce note come into the old man’s voice.

The men jumped for their poles, tossed their lures over the side, and started trailing them through the water.

“Catch me a big fellow, Faiipo!” Tomi whooped, and the fishing had commenced.

I stood upright on the cross boom, where I could get a wide view over the sea. It was alive with masses of fish that reminded me of regiments in close formation. They were mostly bonito interspersed with schools of albacore; but breaking through the ranks, zigzagging among the silver and blue bonito and cleaving companies of golden-striped dolphins, were a few gigantic yellow-fin tuna. The larger fish remained close to the surface; but schools of innumerable small bonito would sound suddenly, seeming to dissolve in the water until all at once there was an empty space in the sea. For a moment they would be gone, and I would turn my attention to a score of porpoises leaping along the horizon, or to the dolphins still under our stern; and when my gaze returned to where the bonito had been, they were there again, swimming along blithely, their backs gleaming like polished steel.

There was something magical about it. Tomi would yell with delight when they appeared from nowhere, and when a monster tuna swam across our bows, he would scream: “There he is! Look at that big fellow! Hey, Ariki!” to the Tuamotuan in the bows. “Land that big boy and Ropati will give you a drink of rum tonight - won’t you, Ropati?”

Ariki needed no bribing; he would rather catch fish than drink all the rum in Tahiti. Crawling out on the forward outrigger cross boom, he fished with bloodthirsty glee, hooking one bonito after another, and with a deft jerk of his pole tossed them into the canoe where the barbless hook freed itself and was whipped back into the water again.

Faiipo fished from the lee side, where the school of small dolphins had dashed up at sight of his lure. He pulled in twenty in as many minutes. Some were golden and some bluish-silver when taken out of the water. As soon as they flapped their slim bodies in the canoe a rapid transition of colors variegated their skins. From mottlings of silver and gold they would

change by perceptible degrees to other colors no less splendid - a prodigal gesture in death, beautiful and pathetic.

Presently we ran into a great school of flying fish; then such a mad scene followed as few men have witnessed. The birds dived to the sea in their thousands, each one screaming in hungry excitement; they rushed for the flyers, plunged into the water, and even dashed against each other or fought with the luckier birds for their catch in the furious rush for food.

The sea whitened with foam as tens of thousands of bonito flew after the flyers, often leaping in the air to catch them on the wing. The ranks were broken; schools of small bonito mixed with the larger albacore; dolphins rushed wildly in every direction, with such speed that one's eye could scarcely follow them; the huge yellow-fin tuna churned the water with their powerful tails. On both sides, ahead and astern, was a confused, criss-crossing, leaping and plunging maelstrom of fish.

I wonder if a single one of that great school of flying fish escaped. Certainly few lived to feed the next army of bonito that should find them; for when one of the panic-stricken flyers soared in the air a dozen birds were there to pounce on him and noisily tear him to shreds; and the instant he had touched the water, like a flash a dolphin or a bonito had him in his jaws.

We would watch one of the frightened flyers soaring a few feet above the water, and almost imagine that we could feel his body palpitating with fear. Close by a booby would swoop down with folded wings; beneath him a great albacore would whip the water, following every swerve of the flying fish. The flyer would hold out as long as he could, aware of his relentless enemies; but finally the booby would be upon him and he must return to his element. Then, often before he had touched the water, the albacore would leap into the air to catch him. There would follow a milling of foam, a swish of a big tail above the sea, and the albacore would dart off after another of the little flyers, while the booby circled, screaming querulously before winging off to hunt his food elsewhere.

Far out at sea, a half mile from the canoe, we could see foaming patches of ocean where the silver bellies of the bonito flashed in the sunlight. On the cross boom Ariki was insane with sanguinary glee. In the excitement caused by the flying fish, the bigger fish jumped for his lure as soon as it touched the water. Often when it was out of the water, two or more fish would leap at the same time, to fight for it in the air. Then, for a moment,

there would be a turmoil in the water, a babble of yelling, a scream from Tomi, until Ariki, with a mighty heave, had swung the fish into the canoe.

Presently a tremendous yellow-fin tuna took Ariki's lure. Instantly the pole was jerked downward so that it pointed directly into the water. Ariki held on like grim death, clutching the pole with both hands and winding his legs around the cross boom. With a tug the fish whirled him round so that he was hanging upside down under the spar, his head submerged a part of the time. At the same instant Faiipo tossed a small dolphin into the canoe; then, laying down his pole, he jumped on the cross boom to help Ariki. This sank the outrigger in the water, so I moved off the boom and Pauoto eased himself halfway along it until again the rigger was skimming the surface.

It seemed like minutes, though only a few seconds could have elapsed before the canoe rose to a big sea, and at the same instant the tuna tugged downward. Seeing the danger, Faiipo made a grab for the pole, but he was too late. Ariki was torn from the cross boom and fell into the sea, still holding his pole!

"Look out!" Tuahu yelled as the outrigger, losing the weight of Ariki, flew into the air! I jumped out to fling myself along the cross boom just in time; then Faatomo had let go the sheet, the sail had luffed, and the danger was over.

When I had time to look round it was to see Ariki climbing into the canoe. He still had the fishpole, but the tuna was gone.

"There's your Tuamotuan fisherman!" Tevearai, the loud-mouthed, cried. "Now, if I had been on the cross boom I should have landed that fish!"

We all laughed at Tevearai; but Ariki gave him a wild look and refused to touch his pole again that day.

When I turned to glance again over the sea, the flying fish were gone. Again the close ranks of bonito swam near the canoe; the schools of albacore finned lazily a few yards away; the great yellow-fin tuna broke through the ranks like officers inspecting their troops; the dolphins flashed their golden bodies in the sunlight. The sea was serene. One could not believe that it ever had been, or ever would be, otherwise.

The Gale

The day after the big fishing all my Vaiiti neighbors feasted, for it was customary to divide the first day's catch of the albacore season among all the villagers. On the following days the fish would be sold locally or, if the catch were big enough, sent to the Papeete market. Tuahu asked me if I would join in the next fishing. I excused myself. The long day in the hot sun had made me feverish; another time, I said, I would go with them. In the early morning hours I heard them setting out in Faatomo's canoe - the same men, Tomi included, who had gone out the first day.

A few hours later, at sunrise, Terii and I started up the valley to gather oranges. The first of the year's fruit was ripening, Tuahu had told us, near the Great Cliff of Autara. The river being low, the fords were shallow; but the air, I thought, was sultry and oppressive. Before we had gone a mile, thick leaden clouds formed low over the mountains; then a gust of wind tore through the forest and rain came down in a deluge. We stood for a time in the shelter of a chestnut tree, waiting for the rain to abate; soon it became apparent that it had set in for the day, so we turned seaward, a little worried about Tuahu and Tomi, yet assuring ourselves that they could take care of themselves.

The river rose rapidly. By the time we had reached the last ford the water was chest-high, a muddy torrent tumbling over the rocky bottom with the noise of a cataract. We did not try to cross it, but climbed the ridge to one side and followed it down to the road; then we hurried on to the house on the beach.

Mama-Reretu was there. She was worried, but she smiled and laughed when she spoke of the drenching the fishermen would have. Even as Mama-Reretu spoke, a vicious gust of wind roared through the groves behind us. An instant later it seemed to grasp the house and shake it to its foundation. Driving rain came down in a deluge so heavy it blurred the lagoon beach, twenty feet away. When it had passed there was a spell of calm, and for a time we could see Vaiiti Passage with its flanking reefs, quiet now, for we were on the lee side of the island. But farther out, the sea was white with

breakers, and along the horizon we could make out the serrated line of combers.

As the day advanced the gale increased until it had reached the full force of an equinoctial storm - a toerau, in the native tongue. We should have thought nothing of it ordinarily, for during each hurricane season three or four such gales came down on us from the northwest. Even today we were not greatly concerned: the fishermen would be having a nasty time, of course, with their sail taken in long ago, and, no doubt, Tomi bundled up in it. But Faatomo's canoe was a seaworthy craft, and if worst came to worst they could paddle with a beam wind to Teahupoo Peninsula, which stretched to sea fifteen miles at right angles to the Vaiiti littoral. Certainly that was what they had done, we decided when dusk set in and the gale was raging at its highest. We hung a hurricane lantern over the verandah railing, nevertheless, to guide them through the passage should they have decided to paddle for it. Then we waited.

It was the dark of the moon, so the night was very black indeed. Though we knew that the gale was blowing steadily at sea, ashore it came upon us in violent gusts. First we would hear a distant roaring far up the valley, which gathered force as it approached until the note was changed to a screaming of wind in the coconut groves; then, with a deafening roar, it would be upon us, shrieking in the alligator-pear tree where Old Bill and his flock roosted, shaking the house and tearing at the roof until we expected to see it carried away. The gust would end with a volley of rain; then quietness for a time, until again we heard the gathering thunder far up the valley.

Early in the night Terii stretched out on a mat to fall asleep; but sleep was out of the question for Mama-Reretu and me. She sat in one of my steamer chairs, rocking her body gently, at times leaning forward to roll a pandanus-leaf cigarette, or turning to me to speak casually of village matters as though she would avoid thinking of the men at sea. But most of the time she was silent, her face drawn, her eyes staring fixedly across the verandah railing, her body rocking gently in the manner peculiar to age.

About midnight, during a temporary lull, we heard a muffled shout from somewhere in the lagoon.

"It is Tuahu, Mama-Reretu!" I exclaimed, starting to my feet.

"No, Ropati; it is not he," she said quietly. "It is someone with terrible news!"

“Nonsense, Mama-Reretu; it is Tuahu!” I repeated; then I moved to the verandah railing to peer into the darkness.

The wind was dead, the night very still save for the distant roar of Vaiiti River. It was moments before we heard another sound, and I for one had decided that my imagination had played me a trick, or that it had been only the cry of a sea bird. Then all at once there was a splashing noise, a groan, and a half-naked man staggered out of the lagoon shallows into the circle of light. We did not recognize him until he had stumbled up the verandah steps and collapsed on the floor. Then we saw that it was the Tuamotu pearl diver, Ariki! He was grinning fiercely; his bloodshot eyes seemed to have a bewildered, demented look.

“Where are Tuahu and the others, Ariki?” I cried. “Are they safe?”

The Tuamotuan stared at me; then he muttered something in his own language, which I could not understand.

“Give him rum,” Mama-Reretu said. Her voice seemed very weak and forlorn. I thought she was about to break into tears, but she was too brave a little woman for that.

In a moment I had a half tumblerful to his lips. He gulped it down; then started talking brokenly in Tahitian and Tuamotuan, only part of which I could understand. I must have given him too much of the fiery Tahitian liquor, for in his weak state it soon went to his head; his words became confused; in another moment he had slumped down on the floor to fall asleep. I covered him with a woollen blanket and turned to Mama-Reretu.

“Their canoe is wrecked,” she told me. “It was capsized and the outrigger was broken; but they are still alive and are paddling for the reef of Teahupoo.” Then she muttered something about little Tomi, and glanced up at me diffidently, with an appealing expression in her dim old eyes.

I had already made up my mind what to do. “Stay here with Terii, Mama-Reretu,” I said. “I am going to Atua’s house to telephone for a schooner. If they don’t make Teahupoo to-night, there will be a vessel out there to pick them up the first thing in the morning.”

She gave a little sigh and sank back in her chair. I left her immediately and hurried through the darkness to the chief’s house. It seemed hours before Atua could get any response from the Papeete end of the telephone line; then there was another long period before he could make connections with the Club. At last he turned to me with a nod and handed me the receiver.

In a few words, yelling at the top of my voice, I told Alex of the accident and asked what schooners were in Papeete.

He named Captain Owen's Potii!

"Can you get me Captain Owen?" I shouted.

"He's here at the Club!" came from Alex faintly; then there was an ear-rending din for a moment or two, and when it had died away I heard Captain Owen's familiar voice.

I explained the situation. "Come quickly!" I shouted. "I'll pay all expenses - anything!"

"Never mind about that, my boy!" I could just hear in a buzzing of wire noises. "Good-bye! Glad you called me! I'll be there!"

Early in the morning we saw the Potii steaming back and forth beyond the passage. Gradually she worked to seaward until, during lulls between the squalls, only her masts were visible. Then, about noon, she moved toward Teahupoo Peninsula, where she was lost in a long rain squall, and we did not see her again for two hours, when she was making straight for Vaiiti Passage.

"He's found them, Mama-reretu! I'm sure of it!" I cried. "He's coming straight for Vaiiti Passage to bring Tuahu and Tomi and the others back! We'll be laughing over our fright soon!"

Reretu did not reply; she had broken down for the first time and was weeping. Terii knelt by her chair, her arms round Reretu. "He won't bring Pauoto back!" she cried, and fell to weeping on the older woman's shoulder.

I left them to drag my canoe into the water and paddle a way in the lagoon, ready to board the Potii the moment she had dropped her anchor; and in a few moments she was there, her chain was roaring through the hawsepipe, and I was climbing over the side.

Captain Owen met me at the rail. "Come into the cabin," he said. "I'll tell you all about it presently." His face was drawn; his lips pressed tightly together.

With a quick glance over the deck I saw only the Potii's sailors. "Tell me the worst, Captain," I said, feeling hope suddenly leave me.

"It's not as bad as it might be," he replied; then repeated that I should go into the cabin.

"Tomi is there," he said. "Some of the fishermen are in the fo'c'sle, piping off a watch below."

We went into the cabin, then, where I found Tomi in one of the berths, bundled up in blankets, fast asleep.

“Don’t wake him,” the Captain said. “He’s a bit feverish - nothing serious, though. He’ll be right enough in a day or two.”

I wanted to ask him about Tuahu, but I was afraid to frame the question. Captain Owen motioned me to one of the benches; then he went into his cabin and returned with a bottle of wine.

“Wine is a great comforter,” he said, as he pulled out the cork and sat across the table from me. “I remember when I lost my wife in Penrhyn Island. It was a painful time. She had just given me a fine son, and, well, you know ... the sun just about rose and set for her. I thought my mind was going when I laid her in the grave... I think, Ropati, that a bottle of barsac - the same vintage as this - about saved my reason.”

He filled our glasses, nor would he speak again, save to mention news from Papeete and the outlying islands, until we had drained them and they had been refilled. Then he leaned forward and told me the story:

“From what I gather, it was like this,” he said. “Your friend, Tuahu, and the rest of them sailed out with the land breeze early in the morning, and were about six miles to sea at sunrise. There they waited for the trade, but, as you know, the southeast wind failed them. Shortly after sunrise it clouded up and started to blow from the northwest - a regular toerau. They were aware at once of their danger, so they headed the canoe into the wind, trying to beat up to the passage.

“I believe that they might have made it with careful sailing, but as luck would have it they ran into a school of bonito before the wind had become too strong to be really dangerous; and like true fishermen, though it might cost their lives, they had to land a few of those fish.

“I understand that they were well in the centre of the school, and that the fish were taking their lures as soon as they touched the water, when a gust of wind caught the sail close-hauled, and the canoe capsized!

“That might not have been too serious; but when they tried to right the canoe they found that the after-outrigger cross boom had been broken, while the forward one held the outrigger only by its lashings, for the bracing pins were torn out and lost! They got to work, however, lashed the outrigger snug to the forward cross boom, and then, bringing its afterend close to the stern, made it fast some way or other. Then the mast was

unstepped, rolled up in the sail, and dropped astern with a painter to the canoe. It was abandoned later.

“By then the wind was blowing a full gale, the sea was choppy, and they had drifted another mile from shore. They should have tried to bail out the canoe first thing; but they had neglected it, and by the time the outrigger and the mast were secure it was too late. A Tuamotu lad they had aboard tried to paddle the canoe dry in the native way by jerking it back and forth to wash the water out; but the seas broke over her as they would over a reef, and after an hour’s work they realized that they would have no make the best of it in a swamped canoe. By then they had drifted another mile from shore.

“Tomi had been holding on to the side like a brave lad while the men worked. When they climbed into the foundered canoe his teeth were chattering and he was numb with cold, so Tuahu took him in his arms and held him as high out of the water as he could, while the other men paddled for Teahupoo Peninsula, about ten miles away. It was slow work, for they had to sit deep in the water; the seas were ugly, and the outrigger, lying at an angle from the canoe, kept turning them off their course. Thus they kept going through the day, sometimes drifting farther away, sometimes making a little headway.

“At about sunset they decided to lighten the canoe. Two of the men, the Tuamotuan and Pauoto, were told to get out and swim. They left without a murmur and struck out for Vaiti Passage. I guess they must have realized at that time that there wasn’t much chance for any of them.”

“One of them made the shore,” I said.

“Only a Tuamotu man could have done that,” Captain Owen muttered; then he closed his eyes tightly and shook his head, as though to dispel the horror that had come over him. “Well, Ropati,” he went on, “morning came, and as the wind had shifted a little to the west, they found themselves close to the Teahupoo Peninsula. It was a cheering sight, I reckon, though by then the lot of them were nearly dead with cold, and Tomi was all but unconscious.

“They saw my masts, and they knew that you had sent me to search for them; but also they knew that it might be hours before I found them, and that it might then be too late, so they decided to cross the reef. Certain death would have resulted from paddling the broken canoe over, for there were pretty big seas on that stretch of reef. Swimming was their only chance.

“Tuahu studied his men carefully. A big fellow named Faiipo appeared to be the least exhausted. 'Faiipo,' he said, 'take Tomi ashore. Don't worry about me; I'll make it some way or other.' Then he nodded to the other two natives to save themselves.

“Faiipo took the boy on his back, slipped into the water, and made for the reef, the other two close behind. Just before they reached the breakers Faiipo turned to see Tuahu slip over the side of the canoe and swim slowly toward them.

“All three natives made the reef, waded a way into the shallows, and sank down on a coral boulder to rest. From there they saw Tuahu swim directly into the first comber, too dazed or weak to think of waiting for a calm spell. The comber took him and hurled him on the coral; but he was not killed. They saw him rise to his knees - then the backwash caught him and whirled him in a foaming eddy to sea!”

Captain Owen rose and moved to the companionway, where he shouted for his sailors to heave the anchor short.

“I know Tuahu was a kind of father to you, and I know how you feel,” he said, returning to me and laying his hand on my shoulder. “And these things are harder to meet in the islands than elsewhere. We live such sensual lives in the South Seas, with Nature showering her blessings on us, that we forget the grim chances of life: we forget until all at once, it is brought home to us, appallingly, that these things exist.”

Then he smiled, though it must have cost him an effort; and as I rose to leave, he said: “I'm off for Papeete now. I'll take the men and the lad with me so the doctor can look them over... Better come along.”

“No, Captain; I have Tuahu's wife to take care of ashore. I have to tell her, some way, about it.”

“That's right. Well, I'll be going on the dry-docks tomorrow to get my copper patched up; but in a week I'll be afloat again, and about the fifteenth of the month I'll set sail for the Northern Islands... That offer I made you at Aki Au's cafe still stands good.”

The Little Lady in Black

After the death of Tuahu the happy family by the Vaiiti River broke up. Tomi went to live with Faatomo at the other end of the village, Pauoto's wife moved to Hitiaa, and Mama-Reretu bundled up her dresses, and with her Chinese shawl and her gold-framed mirror went to the house of her relative, Toto, who sounded the conch shell on himene nights.

Mama-Reretu seemed to become a stranger. She still smiled when I approached her, and there was always a kindly word for me; but she had suddenly become a very old woman, living in her past, only vaguely aware of life moving about her.

Then, a week after the tragedy at sea, Oura-woman died. She was the old woman who called the himiene singers at dusk, and led them with her weird and lonely songs.

We buried her on a Sunday; and that evening I sat with Atua in his house across from the himene house, intending later to listen to the singers for the last time. On the morrow, I had decided, I should go to Papeete and join Captain Owen's Potii. Terii, it is true, might have kept me at Vaiiti; but she, capricious child, wished to join her mother's people in Hitiaa.

The trade wind blew gently through the groves of breadfruit trees that night; but as twilight set in the wind died down and the mountain breeze streamed down the valleys to flicker the lights in the village houses and touch us with cool delectable fingers.

Presently Toto's conch shell sounded from far down the road; and as the shadows deepened the call was repeated, each time nearer and louder, until presently we saw him tramping slowly by, clad as ever in his black pareu and his white coat. He stopped a few paces up the road to sound a final call; then turned to the right and entered the himene house.

A few moments later, as though coming from the world of spirits, we heard a shrill plaintive voice, piercing the darkness with Oura-woman's refrain:—

“Let us sing! Let us sing!”

It is night now. A half moon casts ghostly light along the village road. The palm fronds, the fluted breadfruit leaves, are glazed with silver. The air is heavy with the fragrance of tropic flowers.

Before long I hear the voice again, closer now; and then I see her, dear little Mama-Reretu, dressed in the blackest of her black dresses, a mere shadow of a woman, moving - or seeming rather to glide - into the stream of moonlight. She passes. Soon I hear her again, singing this time from the steps of the himene house, in a note both sad and forlorn:

“We will sing tonight! We will sing tonight!”

The call pierces the still night air. It is my last memory of Vaiiti.

A Glossary of Tahitian Words

Aita: No.

Aita ino (no bad): Chinese-Tahitian for “good.”

Aita maitai (no good): Chinese-Tahitian for “bad.”

Aita nehenehe (no pretty): A general negative in Chinese-Tahitian.

Aita peapea (pe-ape-a—no trouble): A general affirmative in Chinese-Tahitian, showing willingness, agreement, and so on.

Aue: An exclamation of sorrow or pain, as “Alas!” Or, in regard to physical pain, “Ouch!”

Aue-ue: Alas, alas!

Aue atu ei (more-than-alas): A superlative for “Alas!”

E: Yes, or the article “a.”

Ei! A meaningless word added to poetry or prose for the sake of rhythm.

Eia (e-ia): Ia is the generic name for “fish.”

Fa’aro’o-himene (the singers that are heard): the women singers in a himene.

Fare: House.

Fare putu-putu-ra (house of gathering): Used for himene singing and village meetings.

Fareute (red house): The north quarter of Papeete.

Fee-fee (elephantiasis, or any swelling): A crooked thing, physically or morally.

Fei (one of the Musa): Red mountain plantains, edible only when cooked.

Fetii: Relatives, by adoption or marriage. Even a close friend was often called fetii as a term of endearment.

Haere (to go): Pronounced halay by the Chinese.

Hai: An ejaculation.

Hamaa (hama-a): Embarrassed or ashamed.

Hamani (to make): Used by the Chinese to cover any action.

Haruru: To growl.

Himene (from the English “hymn”): To sing, or, a song.

Iaorana (or-ora-na): Literally, “life to.” The common modern greeting. When it is followed by a pronoun, as iaorana oe (life to you), it becomes correct Tahitian.

I tau tamaiti (my little child): Used also by a parent when speaking of a grown son.

Kai-kai: Tuamotuan verb “to eat.” Often used in Tahiti. The correct Tahitian is tama’a.

Mahana havare (Lying Day): The first of April.

Mai: Here, as in haere mai (come here).

Mamu: Shut up; silence; be quiet.

Manahune: Common people. An ancient term.

Ma’o: The generic name for sharks.

Mape (*Inocarpus efulis*): The Tahitian chestnut.

Mara: A large fish, growing to two hundred pounds, similar to a parrot fish. Elsewhere in Polynesia called maratea.

Maru-haruru (pleasant growlers): The young men singers in a himene.

Maru-tamau-himene (those who hold the himene together): The largest section of the himene singers, who carry the theme.

Mau: To grasp. Pronounced mo by the Chinese, and used, ad lib., “to marry, understand, seduce, catch, purchase, hold back,” and so on.

Miro (*Thespesia populnea*): A large ornamental tree with light green aromatic leaves.

Mitiaro: The name of a schooner.

Miti-hugreen aromatic leaves.

Miti-hue (gourd sauce): A fermented sauce made from grated coconut and salt water.

Nato: A trout-like fish found in all the Tahitian rivers. Highly prized as a food.

Natura (from the English “nature”): Psychopathic cases who eat raw food and omit to wear trousers - that is, nature men.

O: It is. Note the old spelling of Tahiti—“Otaheite.” When the natives were asked the name of their island, they replied: “O Tahiti” (It is Tahiti).

Otaa (Ota-a) or Otaha (genus *Pelecanthus*): The man-o’-war hawk, or frigate bird.

Pahua (*Tridacna*): A bivalve with a strong but not unpleasant clamlike flavor.

Parahi: To remain; Palahi is the Chinese pronunciation.

Pareu (pa-ra-oo): A two-yard strip of red-and-white calico, one yard wide, used in the districts as a kilt, but not worn in Papeete. Throughout the South Seas it is a common sleeping garment.

Pereoo pule (sack wagon): The truck that carried mail and passengers from Papeete to Taravao.

Poe: A stiff, gluey pudding made from arrowroot starch or maniota starch, and fruit. The poe mentioned in this book was made from maniota starch and coconut water, and was baked in lengths of bamboo.

Popaa: A foreigner, not including Chinamen, who were Tinito.

Potii: A young girl; also, the last-born child; also, the name of a Papeete schooner.

Puaahorofenua (puaa, pig; horo, run; fenua, land: hence, a pig that runs over the land): A horse.

Ta'ata: A human being; a person. A Chinaman, however, was not referred to as a ta'ata. Considered less than human, he was simply designated as Tinito.

Ta'ata maamaa (gaping man): A fool.

Tamarii Tahiti: Child (or children) of Tahiti. To be called a "child of Tahiti" was considered complimentary.

Tane: A man (male). When used as a suffix it is complimentary.

Tau-rearea: Literally, "happy youths." The youth of Tahiti; a wild youth; a girl whose morals would be considered loose elsewhere than in Tahiti.

Tinito (from the French chinois): A Chinaman, generic or specific.

Toerau: The northwest wind, supposed to blow from the constellation Orion.

Ufi mene-mene (Ufi mene-mene): A round edible yam (*Discorea alata*).

Ute: A type of song peculiar to the Polynesians. Often obscene to Europeans.

In Tahitian the vowels are pronounced as follows:

A, as in “what”; e, as in “veil”; I, as in “pique”; o, as in “for”; u, as in “rude.” Each vowel is pronounced; there are no diphthongs.

In Tahitian the plural is not formed by a suffixed s, but I have used it to avoid confusion.

Most of the sentences and phrases have been omitted from this glossary, as the translations have been given in the text.

